THE PATH

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PREFACE

The book delineates the Path—the Ancient Wisdom that has come to mankind ever since the world was made and which remains its sole hope of release and salvation. It is this path that all messengers of God come to reveal or uncover in all ages, climes and countries. It is natural and inherent in man. It was not designed by any human being. It is the design of the Creator and none can alter, amend or add to it. It is as ancient as man. The Creator, when He created man, designed this path in him. It is man's exclusive patrimony and heritage. This pearl of great wisdom—the Divine Melody, the Voice of God, the Audible Life Stream, the Holy Ghost, the Word, the Logos, the Nam, the Kun, the Sarosha, the Music of the Spheres-lies hidden in the human body and reverberates at the third-eye focus. It is to this point that the body consciousness has to be retraced, retained and put in orbit of the ever-resounding Immanent Power through the help of a Knowing Master. Then alone shall darkness give way to Light, ignorance to Knowledge and transience to Immortality.

Three principles epitomise the philosophy behind the *Timeless Path: (i) Word or Sound Current,* without which there can be no escape from this vale of tragedy and tears, nor release from the cycle of birth and rebirth (ii) Master, without whom the secret of the Word cannot be obtained, and (iii) Divine Grace, without which Master cannot be contacted. Such in essence is the Path that the Messengers of God unfold.

Only when we manifest the Lord within ourselves,

can we see Him everywhere, in every leaf, in every grain, in every particle of sand and realize that nothing can happen without Him. The entire creation and its motivation are His dispensation. He is the Doer behind all scenes. He is the player behind all games. He is the one who pulls the strings of the puppets behind all puppet-shows.

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"Sugar, honey and buffalo's milk are all sweet; but incomparable is the sweetness of the Lord."

Sheikh Farid

Saints have come to the world in every age; and [illegible] their country or religion may have been, their [illegible] ways been one and the same : to know God and to seek *release from the cycle of births and* deaths. The founding of new religions, creeds and sects has never been the purpose of their teachings. Creeds and sects breed passions which invariably lead to quarrels and conflicts, while the essence of the Saints' teaching is love and harmony among the people of the world.

While a Saint is alive, we listen to his words, but we do not heed them. So, as soon as he leaves the world, we turn to rites and rituals and thus completely forget his real teachings. Unfortunately, we begin once again to interpret his lofty teachings and the truth of his experience into creeds and sects, thereby sowing the seeds of discord and dissension. We do this, actually, for selfish reasons and justify it in the name of national honour or the prestige of traditional religion. What greater injustice could we do to these great Saviours than to misinterpret and narrow down their teachings, and freeze them into creeds and sects that are based upon partial or incorrect versions of their teachings? If we were to search for and study carefully the purely spiritual content of their messages with an unbiased mind, we would find that all Saints or Masters bring the same one message from the Home of the Lord.

First, the Saints tell us that nothing that we see in this world has come into being of itself. There must be some Creator, and this Creator is the one Lord, the one God of us all, whom we remember with love and devotion by millions of names and who is the supreme object of our search and our spiritual yearning.

Our soul is of the essence of the Lord. We are a drop of that vast Ocean of Divinity, a ray of that mighty Sun.

> "The Lord dwells in the fourth realm;
> The soul is a particle of that all-knowing One."

Kabir Sahib says:

> "O Kabir, the soul is a particle of Ram (God);
> Though it is in the body, it is never destroyed."

Similarly, Tulsi Sahib says:

> "The soul is imperishable, being a particle of God,
> Of that Absolute Truth, Consciousness and Bliss."

Guru Nanak Sahib says, "The soul is in God, and God is in the soul." To illustrate how this is possible, take the example of a banyan tree. How spacious and sprawling is this tree, but how very small is its seed! If somebody were to tell us that there lies latent in this tiny seed the mighty tree, we would not easily believe it. But when we plant the seed and nurture it, the small sapling that sprouts from the seed grows, in course of time, into a mighty tree. Then alone do we realize that this little seed had the huge tree in its bosom, and that the tree has in it that tiny seed and many others like it. Thus, Guru Nanak tells us that when we carry out research within ourselves in accordance with the teachings of the Saints, we will

discover that the soul is within the Lord and the Lord is within the soul.

The Law of Karma

We feel, however, that we are separate from God and are entangled in this tight net of illusion. This is due to the fact that when the soul came down from God it took the mind as its companion. The mind is the slave of the senses. It runs after sensuous pleasures and worldly objects. Whatever the mind does, the soul has perforce to suffer the consequences of it, because the soul and the mind are knotted together. Sages and seers have called this world the "field of actions". Mohammed Sahib has called it the "field where you sow for the future." His saying is : "This world is the field *cultivated* for the hereafter." Gossain Tulsidas says in the *Ramayana* that the law of Karma reigns supreme in the world. Christ says, "As one sows, so does one reap." Similarly, Guru Nanak says:

> "Do not blame anybody; our own deeds are responsible for whatever happens.
> As I did, so did I fare. Why then blame others for it?"

Christ says: "This world is the field....Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." Guru Arjun Dev calls the world the "harvest of actions."

This world is a vast field of actions and reactions. Cause and effect are truly its warp and woof. Whatever deeds, good or bad, we do in this world, we must bear their consequences. If we sow pepper seeds, we shall harvest pepper; we can never harvest apples. Nor can we sow thistles and expect to gather roses. When we sow mangoes, we can enjoy the fruit of

mangoes. Whether we perform good deeds or bad ones, we have to tread the eternal wheel of births and deaths in order to reap their fruit. Good deeds may make us kings and rulers. They may give us sway over vast dominions. They may promote us from C-class to A-class prisoners in the vast prison-house of this world. They may raise us from huts into palaces. They may free us of iron fetters and replace them with gold ones. They may even entitle us to go to heavens and paradises, which, too, are the regions where the senses prevail. But after exhausting our good karma, we must return again to the physical or material world. On the other hand, if we do bad deeds, we must, of course, go to the regions called hell, and the cycle of eighty-four* is ever ready to imprison us again. Swami Ji says, "Whatever actions you do, you must suffer their consequences." Sahjo Bai says:

> "Worm or insect, god or imp or devil,
> Or beast or bird or man,
> Or any of the vast and varied forms
> That have their home in the sea;
> All these are born because of karma,
> All these of countless forms and hues."

The rich and the poor, the king and the beggar, the man or the woman, all are reaping the fruits of their karmas. Wherever the place of one's birth may be, one goes through a long chain of suffering and misery, pain and difficulties. Separated from the Lord, one has no peace or respite anywhere. Study any species of living beings and you will find that peace is wholly

*The 84 lacs or 8,400,000 species of minerals, plants, animals, human beings and others that were created by the Lord and which now exist in the physical or material world.

alien to it. Every day we butcher birds and animals in hundreds and thousands. We have no compunction at all about cutting off their necks with knives. What peace can there be in the life of a hen, a sheep or a goat? We forget how we would feel if we were to be reborn as a hen or an animal because of our karmas, and (how we would feel) if our neck were to be cut through by knives. When a doctor prepares a hypodermic needle to give us an injection our whole body begins to tremble in spite of the fact that the injection is for our good. Think of the life of a camel, which is laden with a heavy load and is pulled along in a caravan by a nose string. Consider the case of a horse. We see how day after day it is harnessed to a carriage with a large number of passengers in it, and how mercilessly it is whipped to keep up a rapid pace. The same is the case with a bullock. All day long it pulls a plough in a field. If it is overcome by exhaustion and falls down, the farmer does not hesitate to use an iron goad to make it get up again.

In the same way you may study the case of every kind of living being and you will find that all are afflicted with troubles, suffering and difficulties. Not to mention the plight of the lower species, consider the case of man, who is "the darling of the universe," who is "the top of creation", who is made in the image of the Lord Himself, whom sages and seers have regarded as a being designed by God and in whom God Himself resides, and whom Muslim faqirs have considered superior to the entire Creation. Man regards himself as higher than gods and goddesses. Notwithstanding all this, even in human life there is little peace. Some are unhappy because of disease,

others because of unemployment. Some have no children and yearn for them day and night, while others have a large number of children and can hardly provide for them. Some have to use force for repayment of money they have loaned and must go to the law courts for attachment orders, while others have to pay off their debts and live in such fear of their creditors that they do not even sleep at night. Every day we see the sorry spectacle of beggars in great misery, stretching out their hands for alms and exposed to the inclemencies of all sorts of weather. They cry out the whole day, voicing their pain and suffering and their utter penury. Just visit a hospital and you will hear the cries of patients who are in agony. Similarly, if you were to visit a jail, you would hear pathetic tales of distress from the prisoners.

Wherever you turn in this world, you will find pain and suffering. Just turn on a radio at any time of the day and you are likely to hear news of one religion fighting against another or of one country attacking another. Castes, creeds and colours have their own arenas of discord and dissension. The result is fighting and wars which leave millions of men, women and children dead, widowed or orphaned. Such is the world that lies before our eyes. We are kept on the run all the time to earn our livelihood. In constant fear of death, we do not even know when it may put its icy hands on us. Seeing the unhappy condition of the world, Guru Nanak cried out, "This whole world is afflicted with pain and suffering." In the same strain, Sahjo Bai says, "The rich are in pain and the poor are the very picture of pain." Tulsi Das Ji says, "The whole world and its creation are in distress."

How can we find peace and contentment in this world? If we cannot heave a sigh of relief when in human form, how can we do so in the form of any other species? The Saints and Masters tell us that nobody can ever have lasting peace and contentment in this "vale of tears", where there is no pleasure unmixed with pain. It is a place of good deeds and bad deeds, and we suffer pain or enjoy pleasure according to the nature of our deeds. If you were to study closely the lives of worldly people, you would not come across a single person who has all pleasure and no pain; nor would you meet anyone who has all pain and no pleasure. We find that if we have ten days of pleasure, we have pain following close behind. If we spend ten days in pain, we soon have a breathing space that contains some pleasure. "The same refinement which brings us new pleasures, exposes us to new pains." All our pains are due to our evil karmas in past lives, the consequences of which we are bearing now. And whatever moments we have of pleasure are due to our good karmas.

It is the combination of good and bad karmas that shapes our destiny to get the human form, through which we settle our account of both good and bad deeds. If we had only good deeds to our credit, we would be in one of the heavens. On the other hand, if we had only bad deeds in our account, we would be in one of the hells. Some people have done more good deeds than bad ones. For this reason we see them apparently more happy than others. Others have more of bad deeds than good ones, and therefore they are more unhappy than others. It is for this reason that there are in the world so many pairs of extreme opposites: riches and poverty, health and

illness, high position and low, glory and dishonour. Everyone has his own individual karmas, the account of which he is settling in this world. This world has never been a paradise; nor can it be one in the future.

When we study the history of the world, we find that ever since it came into being it has never been free of discord and dissension, disease and pestilence, happiness and misery; and this, notwithstanding the fact that this world has had the good fortune of being blessed even through the ages by the presence of sages and Saints and social reformers. The Saints tell us that the world has not improved nor can it improve. The mission of the Saints is not to make this world a heaven on earth, but to apprise mankind of a technique by following which he can end the cycle of birth and death, and be released from returning to this world.

If we were to try to remove the thorns of the world, we would never succeed. But if we were to put on strong shoes, the thorns would become completely ineffective. The problems of this world will always remain insurmountable. No one has ever solved them for all time to come, nor will anybody do so in the future. By following the teachings of the Saints or Masters, however, we can rise above the sphere of matter and mind so that pleasure and pain do not affect us. Christ says in the Bible, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matthew 10:34-35).

This means: I have not come to turn this world into a place of bliss and happiness, but I have come

to release human beings from the prison of this world. I have come to break the chains of attachments to father, mother, son, daughter, friends and relations and thus take people out of this cycle of repeated births and deaths.

Doubtless, there is no scarcity of philanthropists and social reformers in the world. Many noble souls and kind-hearted people have been born time and again in this world, and have tried their very best to give relief to suffering humanity. The benevolence of the Saints, however, is unique as no one else is capable of such great kindness.

This may be well illustrated by a short story. In a jail there is a large number of prisoners. A kind-hearted philanthropist goes to the prison and pays for the supply of cold water to the prisoners every day during the hot summer. He has certainly done a very good thing for the prisoners because he has given them something refreshing to drink instead of the warm water they were getting before. Another noble and kind-hearted philanthropist then goes to the prison and, finding that the prisoners are getting very poor food, provides them with delicious meals which the prisoners enjoy very much. He has also done a very good thing for the prisoners. Then a third kind-hearted philanthropist goes to the prison and, seeing that during the freezing cold winter the prisoners have no warm clothing, he spends a large sum of money and provides them with woollen clothes. He has also done a great good deed, possibly excelling that of the other two charitable men. Taking pity on the prisoners, all the three benefactors have done their best to improve their lot. From C-class prisoners, they have become A-class prisoners, and their life

in the jail has been made much more comfortable and far less unbearable. But in spite of their help, the prisoners were still prisoners and had to remain in the jail.

Then a fourth kind-hearted man goes to the prison. He has the key of the prison and he opens its gates and sets the prisoners free forever. Thus, the kindness and generosity of the fourth man is of the greatest value. Saints come into this world with the key of this vast prison and, by engendering in us love for the Lord and telling us the way to our real Home, they release us for all time to come from this labyrinthine dungeon. Therefore, the value of the help given by the Saints or Masters is far higher and far greater than that of any charitable person, social reformer or political leader.

As long as the soul does not go back and merge in its Source, we can never escape from the prison of the body or the suffering and misery of this world. Kabir Sahib says, "O Bird of Heaven! Let us fly away from this land to Sat Lok (the Land where Truth abides)." Swami Ji says, "Come! Let us return to our own Home. Why live in a foreign land?" Guru Nanak Sahib says, "Only the soul that is united with the Lord enjoys the bliss of eternal wedlock."

The Soul and the Lord

Our soul is likened to a wife and the Lord is likened to her husband. The soul can gain true bliss only when it reaches the feet of the Lord, and thus becomes truly happy as a loving wife is with her husband. Further, Guru Nanak says, "Only those who return to their True Home are really happy." Such souls attain eternal bliss. In the Katha Upanishad,

the lord of Death gives a similar reply to Nachiketa. Maulana Rum also says:

"Verily, this world is a vast prison,
And we are all prisoners in it;
Make a hole in the roof of this prison,
And run away from it."

Many Saints have described the relation of the soul and the Lord as that of a wife and her husband, for the wife can get true happiness and peace only when she is with her husband. If she is away from her husband, no matter what you may give her—honour, glory, or riches—she can never get happiness or peace of mind.

"O heart, dear heart, where will you find a heaven,
If you seek not the name of Hari (God),
And thereby meet your sweetheart?
Useless is all flattery and useless all sensuous delights.
The body itself, without Him, is of no real use."

Those who belong to the Ramakrishna Mission liken the relation of the soul and the Lord to that of a mother and her son. As long as a child surrenders himself to his mother, he has no anxiety, no fear. He knows of no greater pleasure than that of the lap of his mother. Jesus Christ describes the relation of the soul with the Lord as that of a son with his father. As long as a child has his father to look after him, he has no worry or anxiety of any kind. All this, in short, means that the soul can gain bliss only when it meets the Lord.

The State of the World

Sahjo Bai, a great woman Saint, says:

"The rich are unhappy,
The poor are the very picture of misery;

The Saint alone, O Sahjo,
Enjoys true happiness.
To him is revealed
A wondrous mystery."

Similarly, Kabir Sahib says that kings and their subjects, the rich and the poor, are all unhappy and discontented.

"Of all who live in this house of clay, not one is happy;
All live in suffering;
Unhappy is the yogi, unhappy the Kalandar (Muslim holy men),
Who wander from place to place;
And thrice unhappy is the ascetic.
There is not a single tenement of clay
That does not harbour some strong craving
Or is free from all desire.
The wheel of Fortune turns,
And up and down they go,
The householder and anchorite alike.
Knowing this truth of pain, Sukhdev, the great preceptor,
Did from the mother's womb relinquish all desires,
And turned his back on Maya.
But when I speak the Truth, no one believes
And lies I may not tell.
The gods themselves—Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu,
Yea, even they who fashioned this way of life
Suffer unhappiness and so does Udho.
Unhappy, indeed, are both king and beggar,
Each in his own peculiar way.
The whole world is unhappy.
The Saints alone, who have subdued the mind
Are truly happy."

Tulsi Das likewise describes the unhappy state of the world :

"A tortured mind, a suffering body,
Such is the lot of some;
And there be others on whom melancholy

Has set its potent seal.
One sorrow or the other does ever prey upon mankind;
Happiness is the hand maid *of those rare few souls*
Who seek to serve the Saints."

Guru Nanak proclaims from the house-tops :

"*In* pain, O *Nanak*, are all created beings,
Happy alone are they whom Nam sustains."

The entire creation is heavy-hearted and in trouble. Its cup of misery is ever full to the brim. Peace and bliss are for those alone who are wedded to the Lord and depend entirely upon His support. We worldly people forget the Lord completely and do not search for Him within. We try to discover happiness and peace in beautiful scenes and worldly objects. But our own experience tells us that the more we seek happiness but forget the Lord, the deeper we plunge into pain and suffering. The things of beauty from which we seek to derive happiness and contentment are short-lived, fleeting and transient. The happiness derived from them must, therefore, also be short-lived. As long as we do not find something that is eternal and everlasting and make it our own, there can be no question whatever of true and lasting happiness and contentment. For a certain length of time the possession of some worldly object may bring us joy, but its loss may make us very unhappy.

If we look carefully at the world, we will find that what we call joy may very soon be turned into sorrow. For example, when a person gets married, he is supremely happy; but if his life-partner turns out to be querrelsome, overbearing and unaccommodating, his life becomes very miserable. In the same way, when a son is born, the parents celebrate the occasion with

great rejoicing. If, however, the same son, when he grows up, turns out to be disobedient or wicked, or is called away by the Lord, one can well imagine the intensity of the distress and agony suffered by the parents.

We search for happiness in wealth and toil day and night to amass it. We may sacrifice many a valuable principle. We may ruin our health. We may contract some mental disease. We may suffer many ordeals and hardships. But if we do become wealthy, do we find any peace in safeguarding our wealth? If we keep it in the house, there is the constant fear of its being lost by theft or fire. If we keep it in a bank, there is the haunting fear that the bank may become insolvent. Furthermore, we are tormented by thoughts about our income tax, sales tax, and so on. If our friends borrow money from us, we have a recurring anxiety about its being repaid to us. If our wealth is lost, the loss leaves behind it broken hearts and great distress. It may be eaten up either by doctors' bills or by our getting involved in law-suits. Earned by the sweat of our brow, sadly enough, wealth fails to bring us the much-desired happiness. And the misery caused by its loss may often be the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

> "It is gathered, not without sins;
> But it does not go with us at the time of death."
>
> Guru Nanak

We may think perhaps that happiness lies in the enjoyment of life. We therefore try to enjoy to the full the pleasures of senses. We take to animal food and drinking, but these may make us mental wrecks.

We may turn our attention to power and authority

in our attempt to find peace and pleasure. We may become political leaders, and when people take out processions in our honour and praise us to the skies in public and in the press, our joy knows no bounds. Retribution, however, may follow fast. We read in the papers every day of a coup here and a coup there; of how when opposition parties become strong they either shoot dead or hang the same men who the day before were their heroes. Not infrequently these politicians are thrown in jails to die a slow and miserable death. They are often made the targets of abuse and slander. The power that we regarded once as a means to peace and happiness then leads to painful misery and suffering.

> "When you ask for happiness,
> Pain steps forward."

It is apparent, therefore, that we cannot enjoy real and lasting peace and happiness in this world. Whatever appears to be some sort of a pleasure at one time is transformed after a while into pain. The Saints or perfect Masters tell us, speaking from their own experience, that as long as our soul does not merge into its Source, Paramatma, the Supreme Soul or God, there is no hope of our ever enjoying true peace and bliss.

We can obtain happiness from wealth and possessions and from the people and objects in this world only when we are devoted to the Lord. For instance, when a child, holding the hand of his father, goes to a fair, he is delighted to see everything there. He sees the dazzling lights, the merry-go-rounds, the beautifully painted toys and the shops that sell candy and cakes. He imagines that the joy he experiences

comes from the many things he sees at the fair. But he realizes his mistake when in the jostling crowd, his hand slips out of his father's hand and he gets lost. He then weeps and cries even though all the fascinating things at the fair are still there. He then discovers that he could enjoy the fair only so long as he was holding his father's hand. That is, we obtain peace and happiness in the world only as long as we constantly remember the Lord and are devoted to Him. Separated from Him, we are unhappy. In communion with Him, we are happy.

That is why all Saints engender in us love for the Lord. Guru Nanak says, "Indescribable indeed is the glory of the devotion to the Lord."

All of us in the world are in love with one thing or another. Some are attached to family and children, some to caste, creed and colour, while still others love money. These shadowy, short-lived possessions are not worthy of our love, because our attachment to them pulls us back to "the wheel of eighty-four." They are like garments that we buy at a fair and which we must discard when we depart. It is only intense love for the Lord and true devotion to Him that leads us to our union with Him.

> "None is poor, O Bhika;
> Everyone hath rubies in his bundle;
> But how to open the knot
> He doth not know,
> And thus remains a pauper."
>
> Bhika

The One Lord

It is the experience of all Saints or perfect Masters that the Lord is one. He is the common heritage of

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others; He is the one and the same Lord for all. Guru Nanak says, "There is one Lord and we are all His children." And again, "All creatures have the same one Father." Sheikh Saadi says, "All men are born of the same one essence and are brothers to each other."

Whatever we see around us in the world is created by the one and only God. Muslims call Him 'Rab-Ul-Almin', meaning the Lord of the entire universe. He is eternal and everlasting. He was in existence before this world was created, He is in existence now, and He will be in existence hereafter. There is no question of one God before and another God later on. Guru Nanak says:

> "The One who gives life to the entire universe,
> Is Immortal: He is the One Lord of all."

The One who is giving life to the entire universe is the One God of all. He is imperishable. He is birthless and deathless. In the *Japji Sahib*, Guru Nanak has given a vivid description of this one Lord:

> "One Supreme Being, the Eternal,
> The All-pervading Purusha, the Creator.
> Primordial Truth, through aeons Truth;
> Such is it now and such forever shall it be."

As a result of my long experience, Guru Nanak says, I have discovered within me a Power that is unique and eternal, that never lessens nor ceases, that was, is and will be at times. This Power is that God whom devotees in their love call by thousands of names. Whatever we see except only Him is subject to change, decay and death. Change is inherent in everything. There is nothing that is lasting. Guru Nanak says:

"These three alone do know no change:
Narayan, the Lord, the Guru
And the Truth through contemplation gained."

Elsewhere He writes:

"False is the ruler, false his subjects
False is all the world beside:
False is the palace, false the towers,
And false all those who live there.
Gold is false, and silver false,
And false is he whom they adorn.
The body is false, and falsely clad,
And countless forms this falsehood takes.
False is the wife, and false her spouse.
By winds of falsehood beaten and perplexed,
Falsehood is fond of falsehood,
Forgetful of the Lord.
What friendship can there be in such a world,
Where Time's winged chariot is ever moving on?"

Even this body of ours is transient. And every object of this world we wish to own while in this body is also ephemeral. Thus, there is nothing in this world that is worth our friendship and love except the One Lord who alone is permanent.

Castes and Creeds

This Lord has no creed, religion or country. He has no caste or colour. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, describes the Lord as follows:

"No form, no caste or colour has He.
And from His will the whole creation springs."

The Lord that created the world is neither white nor black. Nor has He any caste or creed. Our soul is of the essence of the Lord. It has come out of the Lord and longs to merge back into Him. How can it have any caste, creed or colour? If you

study the teachings of any Saint or Master, you will find that they all teach and help us to transcend differences of caste, creed and country, and create in us love for the Lord. When the sun has no caste or creed, how can its rays have any? When the ocean has no caste or creed, how can its waves have any? When fire has no caste or creed, how can its flame have any?

God created man, and did not create sects or creeds. Man is responsible for their appearance on the scene. It is we who divide ourselves into narrow circles of caste, religion and country, and thus sow the seeds of strife, discord and dissension. Guru Nanak says :

> "Where the account is to be settled,
> No caste or creed will help."

Where the final settling of our account has to take place, no one will care to ask to which caste or creed we belong. Even our body will not reach that place. It will be consigned either to fire or to the earth. All our castes and creeds will remain behind with the body. Kabir Sahib says very clearly :

> "No one cares for your caste or creed;
> Whoever contemplates on Him, becomes His."

No one will be interested in your caste or creed in the Court of the Lord. It is His worship alone that matters and that enables us to merge into Him. At the place where our accounts are to be settled, no questions will be asked as to whether you are a Hindu, a Sikh or a Muslim, or whether you come from India, America or Africa. It is only your love, your devotion, your intense longing that matter. Bulleh Shah, a Muslim Saint, says :

> "Your deeds alone will be taken into account
> Caste and creed will stand apart uncared for."

Only those who watch their actions carefully are acceptable to Him, while others who in their egotism take pride in caste and religion cannot approach or enter His Court. Tulsi Sahib says:

> "Those of low caste have swum across
> By taking refuge in the feet of the Saints;
> With ego in their hearts,
> Many of high caste have been drowned."

One, who is meek and humble, who regards himself as the lowest of the low, and who has love for the Saints, can easily swim across the ocean of this world. Those who are egotistic and proud of their high caste are invariably drowned. Caste after caste, nation after nation, and country after country have vanished because of arrogance about creed, caste or country. Tulsi Sahib further says:

> "When greatness overcomes a man,
> It lifts him to the heights and then infuses
> Into each tiny pore within his body
> The poison of vain glory.
> He who has not learned the secret from the true Preceptor
> Is, verily, an outcast
> To whichever of the four castes he may belong."

Men who rise to high position often with their first taste of honor and fame, get filled through and through with pride. Unless they meet a Saint and offer their love and devotion to Him, they belong to the lowest of the castes. Paltu Sahib says:

> "Let no one, O Paltu, take pride in caste,
> For love alone counts in the Court of the Lord."

It is only one-pointed and steadfast love for the Lord that enables us to realize Him. Let no one

think that because a person is born in a high caste he alone has the privilege of meeting the Lord; or because he has changed his religion from Hinduism to Christianity, he alone is entitled to God-realization. Similarly, let no one think that, because he is born in a low caste, he cannot realize the Lord. Guru Nanak relentlessly repudiates caste, creed and religion, saying:

> "Those without Nam* are all of low caste,
> And are as low as worms."

Those who come into the world as human beings but do not remember the Lord, belong to the lowest of the castes and will, without doubt, descend to be the lowest kind of creatures. On the other hand, regardless of their lineage, caste or religion, those who love the Lord belong to the highest of castes. Guru Nanak further says:

> "He who within his heart the Word doth cherish
> The greatest king is he.
> He who has Nam within him will fulfil
> The purpose of his life;
> Higher than the highest is the one with Nam;
> But the cycle of births, illusions, snares
> Entrap the man who is to Nam a stranger.
> Salvation comes to him whose heart
> Is the abode of Nam, and whatsoever pleases him
> Is done."

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*Nam, or the Name of the Lord, is the Word or Logos which "was with God, and which was God," and by the outpouring of which from the Supreme Lord the world was created. It is also called the Shabd (Divine Sound), and different Saints have given it many other names. In the Bible it is the same thing as the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. Because it manifests itself within human beings as Sound and Light it is often called the Sound Current or the Audible Life Stream.

One who, after gaining human birth, follows the path of love, constantly listens to the Divine Melody, and becomes completely absorbed in its practice, is truly of the highest caste; for after his brief sojourn on the earth plane he will go back and merge in the Lord. If there be any caste, creed or country of the Lord, the same is surely true of the soul. But the Lord has no such things, and because this is so, every Saint takes us out of the cobwebs of caste, creed and religion, and kindles in us true love for the Lord.

The Lord is Within

All Saints declare on the basis of their own knowledge and experience that the Lord, by meeting whom our souls can escape the miseries of repeated births and deaths, is not somewhere outside our self. He dwells in the innermost part of our heart. The microcosm holds the macrocosm. Whoever realizes Him does so within himself and whoever will realize Him hereafter will also find Him within the human body. If there is one laboratory where we may carry on research in order to find God, it is this temple of the human body. All Saints give the same identical message. Guru Nanak says :

> "The Lord who has given life to the entire creation,
> Who is a supreme Giver, who nurtures and sustains everyone,
> Resides within the human frame."

He further states :

> "Our body is not merely a cave in which to contain the soul;
> It also holds the Indescribable
> And Infinite Lord within it."

And again He says :

> "Within the body resides the Unknowable One;

But those who are foolish and proud know not the Truth,
And search for Him without."

The Lord lives in the human body. But we search for Him outside with our physical eyes. He cannot, however, be seen, because we are slaves of the mind. We are, actually, foolish and stupid. When a thing is lost inside of a house, how can we ever find it by searching for it in the streets outside? Kabir Sahib states the same truth :

"As in the sesamum seed there is oil,
And the spark of fire is in the flint,
In the same way does your Beloved
In your own body reside.
Awaken Him if you can.
As the pupil is in the eye, so is the Creator in the body.
The fool knows not this secret and runs about the world outside,
Searching for Him in vain.
He whom you have tried to find in the four corners of the earth—
He is within; you fail to see Him because He lives
Behind the veil of illusion."

The Lord dwells within this human temple. We are very foolish not to go to the place where we can find Him. Instead, we run around in circles. We retire to forests, to mountain caves or to mosques and temples, but never succeed in meeting Him. Between us and the Lord there is a blinding screen of illusion, and that is why we are unable to see Him. Tulsi Sahib, a great Saint who lived in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, pointed out:

"The Lord is sought in vain in the wilderness afar;
The way to the Beloved lies through the Sushmana."[1]

[1]The Sushmana is known as the Shah-Rag in Arabic. Literally Shah-Rag means "Royal Vein", but this does not refer to a vein in the physical body. It is the central current or canal in the finer body, which is passed through by means of spiritual practice according to the instructions given by a true Master.

There is little use in our searching for the Lord outside when He is all the time within this body of clay. The way to reach Him is also within this microcosm. Christ explains in the Bible that "The kingdom of God is within you." Paltu Sahib says:

"Why are you crying aloud for God
When He is within you?"

The Lord walks with us throughout all the twenty-four hours of the day and night. Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

"He who brought this universe into being—
He is ever present.
Regard Him not as distant from you."

The Lord who created the world is not far away from you. He is all the time with you in your own body. It is in this wondrous cave that you must search to discover Him. Dadu Sahib gives a comprehensive picture of this truth, saying:

"God is so close, O Dadu,
And yet man knows it not.
Being out of touch with Guru's Shabd
He lives a sad and lonesome life.
He thinks that God is far, and far He doth remain,
But He, in truth, is here, there, everywhere.
To see Him present thus, we need the Seeing Eye.
Some seek for Him in Dwarka, and some in Kashi,
Still others seek in Mathura, not knowing that He is within us.
God lives in every man, but rare is the man who knows it;
He alone knows God who loves God."

At times we think that perhaps the Lord is hidden behind the skies. The fact is that we look for Him everywhere else except within the human body, the only place where He can be discovered. Guru Nanak says:

"The lovers of the Lord search for Him within;
Others wander in delusion."

The real devotees and lovers of the Lord who have had the good fortune of keeping the company of a Saint or perfect Master, look for Him within their own body. All others wander hither and thither always filled with doubts and uncertainty, and ever remain away from the Truth.

The Persian Saint, Bulleh Shah, says:

"The Lord of all, O Bulleh,
From us is not apart.
There is nothing that is not of His essence:
But the Seeing Eye is not there,
And that is why the pangs of separation
Must perforce be borne."

Kabir Sahib tried very forcibly to free our minds from these doubts and uncertainties. He explains:

"With stones both large and small is built the mosque,
To the tower of which the mulla climbs,
And cries till he is hoarse, as though the Lord were deaf.
Why does the mulla shout?
Know ye not, O mulla, that the Invisible is not hard of hearing,
And He whom you invoke so loudly lives within your heart?
To the mosque goes the Turk, and to the temple goes the Hindu.
The Lord God whom they do not see remains invisible,
For He is enthroned within them."

We build the house of the Lord of brick and stone, and standing high on top of its tower the priest calls aloud for Him. Quite evidently, this must be a deaf God who does not hear our call. Kabir Sahib tells the priest that the Lord is not hard of hearing and that he need not make such a great hue and cry. The Lord for whom you shout so loudly lives within you, says Kabir. Muslims search for Him in mosques and Hindus in temples, while Sikhs and Christians

look for Him in their gurdwaras and churches. Yet He eludes them all. Unless they enter the Sanctum Sanctorum of their own shrine, the human body, they cannot find the Indescribable One, for He lives within and can only be found there. Tulsi Sahib says:

> "What a pity! And the tragedy of it! That you go to man-made temples and mosques and suffer hardships in vain, while all the time the real mosque is within you."

How fearlessly does Bulleh Shah state the same truth:

> "Let praying be banished to hell;
> Do away with fasting;
> To the devil with the recitation of the Koran;
> The Sovereign Lord was realized within by Bulleh.
> But people are bewildered and in error
> They roam about in ignorance."

He further says:

> "I read the scriptures, both the Vedas and the Koran,
> And sick I was of reading them, time and again.
> I knelt in prayer until my knees were near worn out with kneeling.
> All this is done in vain,
> For God lives not in Mecca.
> No, nor in centers of pilgrimage.
> Whoever realized Him did so within himself."

How sad it is that we go day and night to the places we have ourselves built as dwelling of the Lord in search of Him, but ignore the shrine of the human body, where He actually lives.

If there is any true temple, true gurdwara, true mosque or true church, it is our own body. This place God has designed for Himself, and He sits within it. Kabir Sahib says:

"Complete, entire, and ever-present
Is the One True Lord within the body of each man—
The Lord who is beyond all speech."

St. Paul also calls the human body the "Temple of the Living God." The Hindu sages and seers call it "Nar-Narayani Deh" (the body that is the creation of God and in which He abides). Guru Amar Das also says the same thing :

"This body is the true temple of God;
He is realized through the wisdom of the Guru."

This body alone is the real temple of the Lord, and it is in this body alone that we can gain real knowledge about Him. Just think for a moment, we go and look for the Lord in places such as mosques, temples and churches that we have built ourselves, rather than look for Him in God's own temple where He is Himself everpresent. We keep our religious places neat and clean, and do not let any dirt lie about in them, and hesitate even to utter an unworthy word there, for we believe that these places are meant to be the Lord's dwellings and therefore their sanctity must be maintained. But the place that the Lord has Himself chosen to dwell in is often kept quite dirty and unclean. At one time it is filled with animal flesh and strong drink, and at another is fed with vicious thoughts. Imagine what sins we stoop to commit, and what wicked deeds we do in God's own temple. We greatly value our man-made places of worship, but we treat His own temple with such disdain. The study of history puts us to shame because it shows that even when by mistake a single brick is dislodged in one of these man-made temples, we go to war and kill thousands of God's own temples, namely, human beings. Kabir Sahib says:

"Rama is ours, say the Hindus;
To Rehman do the Muslims lay claim.
Both fight it out to the death,
And pay for this with their lives
Without ever learning the secret."

In the name of religion many wars and battles have been fought. What bloodshed and suffering have been caused! How many children have been made orphans! How many women have become widows! And yet with great pride we call ourselves saviours of religion. We call those who have been killed martyrs. If by merely killing another person of God's creation we could realize God, nothing would be easier and simpler than this act. But we know it is not true. Those who love the Lord also love His creation. When there is only one Lord, when it is He who has created us all, when He dwells within all of us, and it is within the body that we have to look for Him, then to hate one another is to hate the Lord. If one nation despises another, if one religion is hungering after the blood of another, then in that nation or in that religion love for the Lord is not yet born. Those who love the Lord constantly give love to His creation. If we hate His creatures, we also hate the Lord. Guru Nanak says:

"All creatures big or small are His,
And He is the Lord of all.
Whom shall I denounce or condemn,
When there is naught but He in this universe?"

The One True Lord created all of us. He dwells within each one of us. We could only call a person base or evil if there were some other God present within him or if he had been created by someone else.

Kabir Sahib says:

> "The Holy Light was the first-born of heaven;
> From that primeval Light did the Lord God then create
> All forms of life.
> When the Origin of all is the same,
> Who is superior to whom?"

And St. John says in the Bible:

> *"That was the true light, which lighteth*
> every man that cometh into the world."

The light and splendour of the Lord is the heritage of all human beings. No one is wholly good or wholly bad. All are settling the account of their karmas. Saints therefore *always teach that the search for the Lord should be* carried out within oneself, because seeking for Him elsewhere will only result in certain failure. Naturally, the question now arises that if God is within the true temple of our body, why is it that we do not see Him? What is the obstacle in the way, and how can this be removed? Guru Arjan Dev says:

> "A great wonder is this:
> In the same house live the two—
> The soul and her Lord,
> Ever in each other's company, and yet
> *how* strange,
> They never speak, the one to the other."

The Lord within is invisible and He cannot be seen, because of the veil of illusion. Both the Lord and the soul live together in the same house, yet the two do not meet. *The soul is within the* body, and so also is the Lord. But the soul has neither seen the Lord, nor has it met Him.

The Barrier of Ego

The Saints say that our ego, our pride or egotism, is

the greatest barrier that prevents us from meeting the Lord. Guru Nanak says:

> "Each one from ego takes his birth,
> And clad in ego dies;
> And comes and goes,
> Gives and receives, and earns and spends,
> And deals in lies or speaks the truth,
> In ego all the while.
> Heaven and hell and incarnations—
> All these from ego are not free."

He further says, "Those who do away with their ego attain salvation." And again, He says:

> "This ego is a long-standing disease
> Which still may be completely cured with ease;
> If God in Heaven sends His grace,
> And through the Guru's Word,
> The disciple doth the self efface."

We can win salvation while living if we can remove all traces of our ego.

> "Hari, the Lord, is ever true,
> And higher than the highest is.
> But you must crush your ego and realize Him."
>
> Guru Amar Das

The Lord is eternal. He is the highest of the high. He lives in Sach Khand. But as long as ego dogs our footsteps, we cannot meet him. Dadu Sahib explains the same truth, saying:

> "Boast not, O Dadu, be thou humble;
> Make no big claims and live in lowliness.
> How many tried with death, the grocer, to deal
> And could not ever get the best of him."

There is nothing in this world that anyone can own or claim. Everything belongs to the Lord. Regard everything as the Lord's and do not try to possess any-

thing as your own. Worldly objects have never accompanied anybody after death, nor will they ever do so in the future. Many a king and ruler has tried his best to make the world his own, but has failed to do so. It is our attachment, our ego, that keeps us tied to the wheel of recurring births and deaths. This same truth is referred to by Christ in the Bible, when He says:

> "And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."
>
> Matthew 19:24

It is not possible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, nor can rich and wealthy people who give all their attention to the pleasures and possessions of this world ever meet the Lord. Bulleh Shah says:

> "Rise above delusion,
> Give up all the sound and fury,
> Make no difference between the Turk and the Hindu,
> All are good men here, no one a thief,
> For the Lord is in each single one of us."

Kabir Sahib says:

> "One enemy or the other
> Doth always tread upon thy heels;
> Lust may be driven out, but anger lingers;
> And greed will stay when anger goes;
> And then, when greed is gone,
> Vainglory, vanity and wish to be honored,
> All these return
> To fill the emptiness left in the mind."

What is ego? It is what we call "my" and "mine", as, for example, my family, my possessions, my wealth, my honor or my glory. In reality, all these belong to the

Lord. We believe ourselves to be separate from Him and try our best to make the objects of the world our own. But these objects have never been anyone's own, nor will they ever be so in the future. The effort that we make to possess them leads us into the quagmire of worthless attachment. We become so fond of these worldly forms and shapes, that we even dream of them during sleep, and at the time of death they begin to appear before us like the things seen on a cinema screen. Whatever we think of at the time of our death, that we become; and then, bound by our attachments to the things of which we think most deeply, we plunge headlong into another birth.

Christ says in the Bible:

> "And man's foes shall be they of his own household."
>
> Matthew 10:36

Of one's true relatives, He says:

> "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and *mother.*"
>
> Matthew 12:50

The Mind

Who or what is in love with and is attached to the objects of the world? It is our mind. Therefore, if there is any obstacle between the soul and the Lord, it is truly our mind. It is for this reason that Guru Nanak says, "He who conquers the mind is the Lord of all mankind." If you subdue your mind, you not only subdue the whole creation, but also its Creator. If there is one enemy worst of all, in the world, it is our mind for at one time it is our friend, at another our foe. If you consider the matter carefully, you will discover that it is under the influence of the mind that religion fights against re-

ligion; nation fights against nation, and brother against brother, and each wishes to get the better of the other. We are often engaged in making plans or plots to harm others. The prime architect of all this is our mind. Therefore, as long as we do not control the mind, we cannot realize the Lord and become one with Him.

What do we mean by the term "controlling the mind"? Just as the soul is of the essence of the Lord, so also is the mind no mean power. It is of the essence of Brahm, and its origin is in Trikuti (the second spiritual region). But alas! Caught in the network of illusion, it has forgotten its place of origin. The soul has become its handmaid, and both are tied together, as it were, in a knot. So long as the soul does not give up the company of the mind, it can never know itself. Nor can it know its source. It leaves the company of the mind only when the mind returns to the place of its origin. Whatever efforts, therefore, we have to make must be directed towards undoing the knot of the mind and the soul. "Know thyself", says Socrates. Guru Nanak says, "That person alone is pure who knows himself." Kabir Sahib affirms:

> "Sadho, Satguru made the invisible visible by making me realize myself"

Swami Ji says:

> "By thy self realize the Self,
> Be not led away by what others may say."

The true meaning of knowing oneself is to rise above the domain of matter and mind, to remove from the soul the three coverings, namely the physical, astral and causal bodies, and to rise above the three attributes—

inertia, activity and harmony. Only then does one know oneself. Our soul was originally pure, spotless and holy, but because of its association with the mind, it has become extremely impure and unclean. For example, the water in the clouds is pure, but when it falls on the ground as rain, it mixes with earth and gathers numerous impurities. It even begins to have an unpleasant smell. It then completely loses sight of its original reality and purity, and begins to think that it is itself nothing but muddy earth. When, however, as a result of the heat of penetrating rays of the sun it rises as vapour, it realizes in a flash its reality and rises up and merges in its source—the clouds.

The condition of our soul is like that of rain. Caught in the closely-woven net of the illusion of this world, the soul has become completely subservient to the mind. In its turn, the mind has become fond of sensual pleasures. Whatever the mind does, the soul must perforce suffer its consequence. Unless it gives up its association with the mind, it is not worthy enough to merge in its Source. Saint Charan Das says:

> "How is it possible in this disordered world
> To steep oneself in contemplation of the Lord?
> Here mind is now a slave to all the senses,
> And soul is no more than a hand-maid
> Who obeys the orders of her lord, the mind."

An electric light bulb, however strong it may be, can provide no light if it is covered with a dozen layers of thick black cloth. In spite of its light, the room it is in will be in utter darkness. But as we begin to remove the covers, the room will grow brighter, and on the removal of the last cover it will become brightly lit. In the same way, as our soul begins to leave the company

of the mind and to shed its covers, it begins to know itself. That is why it is said that "Self-realization is essential before God-realization."

All our endeavors, all our efforts, all our struggles, and all the techniques we use must be directed towards subjugating the mind and withdrawing it to its source at the top of the second spiritual region. Every religion has the same aim and puts emphasis on subduing the mind. We try in a thousand ways to control the mind. We turn for help to recitals of holy books and to undergoing penances, to worship and baths in holy rivers, to the reading of scriptures and religious books, to almsgiving and charities, to burning incense and sacred fires. We even leave our homes and go into the solitude of forests. We hide ourselves in mountain caves. Through discipline we try to detach our mind from the objects of the world, but because our thoughts do not become attached to something superior, something beyond, our mind reacts and rebounds and comes back into the world with as much strength and cunning as ever.

To control the mind with force is like putting a viper in a basket. So long as the lid of the basket is tightly closed, we remain free from the venom of the viper; but the moment it gets an opportunity to escape, it will not fail to bite. Merely by putting a viper in a basket, we cannot be free either from fear of its venom or from its bite. There is always a danger and a risk to our life. If, instead, we catch hold of the viper and remove its poisonous fangs, it becomes absolutely harmless and we can go about wearing it round our neck. There is then no danger to one's life and we need not have any fear of the viper.

In the same way by renouncing the world and running away into forests and mountain caves, we do not gain

inertia, activity and harmony. Only then does one know oneself. Our soul was originally pure, spotless and holy, but because of its association with the mind, it has become extremely impure and unclean. For example, the water in the clouds is pure, but when it falls on the ground as rain, it mixes with earth and gathers numerous impurities. It even begins to have an unpleasant smell. It then completely loses sight of its original reality and purity, and begins to think that it is itself nothing but muddy earth. When, however, as a result of the heat of penetrating rays of the sun it rises as vapour, it realizes in a flash its reality and rises up and merges in its source—the clouds.

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control over the mind; for, when we face the world again, the same cravings and desires of the mind, which have lain dormant for a time, make us once again dance to their tune. The fact is, that our condition becomes even worse than that of ordinary people. This is because the more we suppress a thing, the more it revolts.

Controlling the mind by means of strict discipline is like covering a live charcoal with ashes. Apparently, the fire is dead. But when a gust of wind blows, the ashes are scattered and the fire is once again aglow. In the same way, when the storm of passions arises, the mind gets out of control and runs into impetuous actions with redoubled force.

This forcible control may also be likened to handing over a criminal to the police. So long as the criminal remains in the custody of the police, we are safe from his wicked deeds. But the moment he is released, he returns once more to a life of crime and we have to contend once again with his wickedness. Instead, if we can really reform the criminal by our wise advice and reasoning and can in this way make him a good citizen, we will be freed forever from his evil deeds.

For this reason, the Saints advise us that we can never subdue the mind through forcible discipline. We may obtain a certain amount of relief and peace for a while, but we cannot control the mind for all time. If, therefore, we wish to subdue the mind, we have to study its nature and habits. From experience we know that the mind is fond of pleasure. Thus it may love something or someone very much, but the moment it comes across something better, it leaves the first and runs after the second. No love or attachment can ever keep the mind constant or stable. The very things we were at one time prepared to sacrifice our very life to possess,

thinking that we could not do without them, may lose their value in the opinion of the Mind and we will no longer wish even to see them.

We generally say that the mind is fond of variety. That is, it gets tired of constantly seeing or eating the same thing. If we look back over our life, we find that in our childhood we dearly love our parents. If our mother is absent for no more than two minutes, we begin to cry. Later, when we have brothers and sisters, the same love is given to them. When we go to schools and colleges, the same love is transferred to friends and companions. When we get married, our wife and children monopolize our love. In old age, our love is given to caste, creed and country. It is the same love, but it takes so many forms and is given to so many different people and things. No one love can ever keep the mind fixed. So long as the mind does not get something superior, nobler and higher than worldly love, it is not ready under any circumstances to give up the pleasures of the world.

What is that superior love, by finding which our mind will give up its love for and attachment to the world? Saints tell us that it is the taste of Shabd or Nam or Word or Logos, the inner unstruck music, which is so sweet, so transcendent and so captivating that on gaining it, our mind is automatically and completely satisfied and made calm. Those who get rubies and diamonds have no use for pennies. Girls play with dolls only till they are married. Detachment as such can never result in attachment. It is rather attachment to something higher and finer that brings about detachment in us. If a young girl were to be advised before her marriage that she should give up her love for her parents, her brothers and sisters, her friends and companions, it

would be difficult, nay impossible for her to do so. But when she actually does get married and has won the love of her husband, automatically her love is transferred to her husband. Then, naturally, she forgets her parents, her brothers and sisters and her friends and companions. If we tried to snatch away from a beggar his pennies, he would be prepared to fight desperately for them. But if we hand over to him some gold coins, he will gladly throw away his pennies. Guru Nanak gives a vivid description of the nature of the mind:

> "In countless ways did I endeavor
> To meet the Lord:
> I read the Scriptures and studied the Vedas;
> The Yogic practices (aimed at awakening the
> Serpent Power or Kundalini)
> These too did I perform,
> Still the five foes I could not cast out.
> On the contrary, vanity increased by leaps and bounds,
> And seized upon the intellect.
> No, these are not the roads, my dear friend,
> That lead Godwards;
> Believe me, innumerable such paths
> Have I traversed in vain."

It is neither the reading of scriptures nor their recitals nor Pranayama (control of the breath) and Hatha Yoga that can succeed in casting out the five foes, namely lust, greed, anger, attachment and ego. Again Guru Nanak says:

> "I took the vow of silence
> And contented myself with as little food
> As lay within the hollow of my palm.
> Through the forests I ranged, all naked;
> To the four corners of the earth I travelled.
> I visited all the holy rivers and places of pilgrimage.

But I could not shake off the tyranny of the mind's habitual ways.
And then I permitted myself to be sawn in two
By the Karwat, the celebrated saw.
But alas, with a million such practices
The mind could not be purified."

We may take to silence. We may leave our hearths and homes and run away to forests and mountain caves. We may discard our clothes and go bare-bodied. We may leave behind all household utensils and may use our hands for taking food and drink. We may go on pilgrimages to holy places. We may even undergo various tortuous practices, but still the mind will not lose its dirt and its attachment to worldly objects. To control the mind we may even go to Kashi (Banares) and be cut by the sacred saw called Karwat. We may subject our bodies to severe penances, but the mind will still remain as full of doubts as ever. Bulleh Shah says the same thing in his own way:

"The Lord does not reside in mosques,
Nor is the Ka'aba His abode;
The Koran and other Scriptures
Do not have Him, nor is He
To be found in saying prayers,
Pilgrimages did not bring me
Any the nearer to Him, and I bore
The travail or the journey for nothing.
But when Bulleh found his Preceptor
All attachments vanished at the Guru's magic touch."

There is only one method of subduing the mind and that is to give it the sweet and enchanting taste of Nam, the Word or Logos. As it gets the taste of Nam, it begins to shed its love for and attachment to the world. The sweetness and the magnetic pull of the Word will detach

it completely. Swami Ji explains:

"It is by listening to the music of the Word
That the mind is brought under control;
A million other labours will fail to touch it.
The yogi labours hard at yogic practices;
The scholar seeks to gain Him through learning;
The ascetic engages in doing penances
And soon becomes tired of them.
There is the anchorite who tries his best
To bring the senses under his control.
The hermit sits aloof, meditating within
On one or another image in the mind;
He, too, is in delusion;
The pandit reads the Vedas
And expounds their philosophy;
But the distinction that his learning brings
Is all transient.
Of what account are intelligence and cleverness?
Even scholars repent in the end.
No other action bears any spiritual fruit;
The only way is to absorb oneself in the music of the Word.
When one meets a teacher who knows the esoteric path of the Shabd
The desire for the Word comes of its own accord.
When the soul starts listening to the Shabd
The mind is to a certain extent
Brought under control."

At another place Swami Ji says:

"How shall the sleeping mind awaken, O brother?
A hundred ways have I tried in vain.
Fasts I observed and went on pilgrimages,
Knowledge did I obtain, thus sharpening my intellect.
Countless repetitions and penances I did,
And endeavored to control the senses
And many a time took vows of silence.
Countless were the practices that I performed,
Still the mind did not shake off its slumber.

My ceaseless search led me, in the end, to the true Preceptor;
He revealed this proven way to me:
Cultivate the society of Saints, and spend your time
In serving them; listen to their discourses
And offer yourself, body and mind,
To them as a sacrifice;
Then slowly the mind will awaken.
When I followed this advice the world lost its attraction;
The mind drew strength from the Spirit,
And both ascended to their own abodes.
Without the Word the mind will not awaken,
Even if you make efforts without end."

Still further, Swami Ji says:

"He who has enslaved the mind
Is the truly intrepid warrior.
The deadliest enemy is this mind
Which sits within, and the most arduous task
Is that of conquering it.
To this very task you should apply yourself,
Not wasting your time in other efforts
Which are all fruitless.
First, you must develop love for the Guru,
Listening, time and again, to the Word
That is resounding within.
In this respect follow the advice that I am offering,
And there will be no need for you to make any other effort."

Similarly, Guru Nanak says:

"The mind, when it is attached to the True Nam,
Acquires the attributes of Truth;
All pain and misery are driven out
When Truth is developed within."

It is only the practice of True Nam that purifies the mind and makes it clear and clean. It is this practice alone that saves us from the wheel of births and deaths. Guru Nanak explains by a very apt illustration:

"The mind (which is like a snake)
Becomes still and subdued
When Guru, the snake-charmer,
By Nam counteracts its poison."

If a person is bitten by a snake, he is immediately taken to a doctor for the removal of the poison. Through medicine the effect of the poison is counter-acted and the victim is made well. In the same way, if we wish to remove the poison of the snake of our mind, we must go to a Gurmukh (God-man) and in accordance with His teachings join our mind with that of the in-dwelling power known as Nam or Shabd. There is no second or other way to control the mind. Guru Nanak says:

"Ram Nam hath pierced my mind;
Why then think of other means?"

Our mind, entangled in love for and attachment to the world and its pleasures, wanders aimlessly about like a deer which has musk in its navel but runs madly around in the forest to try to find it. But when the mind comes in contact with Nam or Shabd or the Word, it becomes motionless forever. It is futile to think about or to try any other method to quieten the mind. Thus, Swami Ji says:

"To Surat Shabd[1] devote thyself,
And leave aside all other efforts."

The True Name

If we study the teachings of any Saint, we will find that they all sing the praises of Nam or the Name of God. They all say that the power of this Name is within us. We have many religions, and each has its own rites and

[1]Bringing the soul (surat) into contact with the inner music of the Spiritual Sound (Shabd).

rituals, ceremonies and formalities, but the reality, the *essence of Truth and basis of spirituality at the bottom* of each one of them is the same. All Saints create in us a longing and love for this spirituality. They all explain the way to attain this reality.

It is this Truth that Saints in different countries, in different climes, in different religions and in different times have come to reveal to mankind. The Hindu Saints have called this reality Ram Nam (God's Name), *Ram Dhun (God's Inner Music), Nirmal Nad (the pure* Sound), Divya Dhun (Divine Sound), etc. Guru Nanak generally calls this same reality Nam (God's Name) or Shabd (Spiritual Sound). It is the same power that He calls Dhur Ki Bani (Sound from the Source), Sachi Bani (True Inner Word), Hukam (God's Command), Akath Katha (Unspeakable Tale) and Hari Kirtan (God's Music). Muslim Saints refer to it as Kalma *(Inner Sound), Ism-i-Azam (the greatest Name)*, Bang-i-Asmani (the Sound from the Sky), Kalma-i-Ilahi (the Voice of God), or Sultan-ul-Azkar (King of Repetitions). Christ called it the Word or Logos. In the Rig Veda, it is called Vak (Word). We have no quarrel with these words as such. We must, however, search for the Reality which each Saint glorifies and by means of which our mind is completely satisfied and goes back and merges in its Source.

So long as we do not understand what the Saints mean by Nam or Shabd, where exactly it exists, how we are to join our consciousness with it and why we need to do this, we may go on reading scriptures and the teachings of the Saints for the whole of our life, but we can never fully understand them and profit by them.

In the teachings of the Saints, there is frequent mention of the True Name or *True Bani. Guru Nanak says,*

"It is through the True Nam that true honor is achieved." Thus, there must be another Nam or Bani which is not true. Here Truth means something which is eternal, birthless and deathless. Saints tell us that the Word or Nam is of two kinds: one is called Varnatmik and the other Dhunyatmik. A Varnatmik Nam is one that can be read, written and spoken. All names, such as God, Lord, Allah, Wah-i-Guru, Radha Soami, Hari Om, Parmatma, Parmeshwar and so on, are Varnatmik names.

In every language we remember the Lord by a number of names, these names having been used by Saints who have already visited the world. Many more Saints will still come, and they will perhaps employ numerous other names for the Lord. We tend to forget many of the old names, and in our love for the Lord continue to originate new ones. We can trace the history of each such name, and determine who first used it and when it was first used.

Swami Ji appeared on this planet barely a century ago. We began calling the Supreme Father "Radha-Soami" after Him. We forget that before His advent the world was still here and so were we. The same Lord was also there and we remembered Him by many different names. Similarly, with the advent of Guru Nanak, we started calling the Lord "Wah-i-Guru," but it is only five hundred years ago that Guru Nanak came. After Prophet Mohammed we began calling the Lord "Allah", but it is barely fourteen hundred years ago that Prophet Mohammed came. Likewise, after Lord Ram Chandra we began remembering the Lord as "Rama", and that must have been ten thousand years or so ago. The fact is that every name by which we remember that Lord has its origin, in place and time.

Varnatmik Names are of four different kinds: (1) Baikhri, (2) Madhyama, (3) Pashyanti and (4) Para. The first is spoken with the tongue in the same way that we talk with each other. The second is spoken slowly in the throat. The third is spoken in the heart, and the fourth is repeated by yogis while concentrating on their navel. All these words are Varnatmik and none of them is true or eternal. They all vanish in the course of time. Swami Ji states in His Bani:

> "Let me explain to you, O brother,
> The secret of Nam and the way to distinguish
> Between the two types thereof.
> Varnatmik is the first type;
> It is also called Akshar, and it includes
> Every type of name that is uttered by the tongue—
> In short, all names that you can speak or hear
> Are known as Varnatmik."

In short, the name that can be read, written and spoken, the name whose origin can be traced, whose time and limit can be determined, is called Varnatmik by Masters or Saints.

The Name that all Masters or Saints extol, that they all glorify, that gives salvation, that enables us to control the mind, that helps us to untie the knot of the soul and the mind, that makes us know ourselves and realize the Lord is called Dhunyatmik by the Saints. This Name is the true Nam. It is imperishable. It can neither be read, written nor spoken. Hazur Maharaj Ji used to call it the "unwritten law", and the "unspoken language." Christ also referred to the light and sound of this Name when He said, "Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not." (Matthew 13:13). Guru Nanak praises this Name in these terms:

"See thou without thine eyes,
And walk without thine feet,
And work, and speak and hear,
But use no hand nor tongue nor ear;
Even while living die, and have no fear.
Thus the Word of God thou'lt hear,
And thy Beloved meet."

The physical eyes do not see this Nam. Nor do physical ears hear it. Neither do our feet carry us there, nor can it be caught by our hands. To attain it and to meet the Lord we need to die while living. The Varnatmik names are our means, while the Dhunyatmik Name is our end and object. The former is a road and the latter our destination. For the love of mere words we need not become involved in disputes and dissensions. Instead, we must try to discover the True Name with their help.

What do we,unfortunately, see in this world? Those who remember the Lord as Wah-i-Guru begin to call themselves Sikhs, those who remember Him as Allah call themselves Muslims while those who remember Him as Ram call themselves Hindus. We become so intolerant that it becomes difficult for us even to meet each other. Where this wrangling over words is leading us never occurs to us. If today, however, we were to merge our thought-currents with the True Nam, all strifes and discords would come to an end. It has been stated earlier that we do not really have any caste or creed or country. Conflict lasts only while we are deaf to the music of the True Name and are in love with the names expressed in words.

Every Master or Saint comes to remove our doubts and false beliefs and to join us to the True Name.

The mother, in her love, calls her children by many

different names, but the relation of the mother with her children is not that of words or names. These are merely spoken expressions of her love. Love is one thing and the words another. In the same way, the lovers and devotees of the Lord remember Him by a variety of names. In reality, He is nameless. By whatever name you call Him, He will hear and answer. The words or names simply express the love of His devotees, and these Varnatmik names are reflections of their love. The True Name, however, is quite different. No history of this Name can be traced nor can it be limited by time or space. The True Name created the universe, and now sustains the universe. It is a Divine Power and is our only support. Guru Nanak says:

> "From Shabd (the True Name) all creation takes its birth
> And it is in Shabd that it disappears
> At the moment of its dissolution.
> And once again from Shabd
> It once more takes its rise."

The Word, Logos or Shabd created the world. The moment the Lord withdraws this in-dwelling power which sustains all things, the universe undergoes dissolution and grand dissolution.

The entire creation is comprised of five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether. Everything we see in the world has one or more of these elements in it. All the five elements are opposed to one another, but they are kept together and sustained by the in-dwelling power of the Word. When this immanent power is withdrawn, water dissolves the earth, fire dries up the water, air dissipates the fire, and ether consumes the air. The whole world, in fact, is annihilated. For example, our body is constituted of five elements. So long as we

have the ray of Nam in us, we are alive and active in the world; but when this power is withdrawn, the body dies and decays. The five elements go back to join their source. We cease to exist.

Saints explain that the whole universe is maintained in the same way by the Word or Logos, the True Name. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, says:

> "All beings large or small,
> The heavenly regions all,
> To Nam's creative power,
> Do owe their rise and fall."

Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says, "Everything that we see in the world is a creation of Nam." St. John writes in the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1 : 1, 2, 3). The Rishis and Munis (Sages and Seers) of ancient India state in the Vedas that it is through Akash-Bani (the Divine Sound from the Heavens) that the world was made. It is said in the Koran that Kalma created the fourteen tabaqs (regions) of the world. According to the ancient Chinese philosophy, it is Tao (the Word) that created the world. Guru Nanak says:

> "The Word is the life of sky and earth,
> From its light all take birth
> And all creation sings.
> O Nanak, in all souls that be,
> This heavenly power rings."

Shamas-i-Tabriz, the Persian Saint, says:

> "This Sound createth the whole universe
> And to all lights giveth birth."

We can well imagine that the power that created the world can have no history or any time or space limits.

The Masters or Saints tell us that to attain salvation we need this True Name, which, they say, is the heritage of all mankind. So long as we do not search for it within ourselves, they tell us, do not join our thought-currents with it and do not completely merge in it, there can be no question of our crossing the ocean of phenomena and thus obtaining salvation. Guru Nanak states this truth when he says:

> "It is the True Shabd
> That brings true honor (in the court of the Lord).
> Without devotion to Nam
> No one can gain salvation."

Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

> "They who know not the Shabd
> Are truly blind and deaf.
> Why did they come at all
> Into this world?"

And again, He says:

> "*Without Nam there* is utter hopelessness.
> One neither gains salvation
> Nor escapes from the wheel of birth and rebirth."

So long as we do not discover the True Name, the darkness of ignorance within us is not dispelled, we are unable to realize God and we cannot escape from the cycle of births and deaths.

> "The Satguru, the Valiant Warrior, says:
> The perfect man is he
> Who in the Shabd merges himself."
>
> Guru Nanak

Christ says in the Bible, "If ye continue in my Word, then you are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). Stating the same truth in a different way, He says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth" (John 4:24). Kabir Sahib says:

"Just as a heap of hay
Is reduced to ashes by a single spark of fire,
So are all your sins consumed
The moment Nam enters your heart."

When Nam enters into the inner recesses of our heart, all our karmic accounts are settled. It is because of our karmas that we are imprisoned in bodies. However high a heap of hay may be, a small spark of fire reduces it to ashes in an instant. So also are our sins washed away by the practice of Nam. Guru Nanak says:

"One may bring wood from far and near.
And stack it in a heap.
But lo, a little fire
Reduces it to ashes.
Even so is all too soon consumed
One's great store of sins,
When Saints apply to the sinner
A spark of the Name of the Lord."

Swami Ji points out the same truth, saying:

"The Shabd destroys the accumulated karmas;
The Shabd makes us merge in the Lord."

Christ says in the Bible, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). The true Shabd that I have given you, He says, has

completely washed away all your sins. Kabir Sahib speaks of the power of the True Name in a most emphatic manner, saying:

> "True glory lies in the repetition of Nam;
> Even a leper whose skin drips with infection,
> Is blessed if he attaches himself to Nam.
> Of what use is a golden body,
> If the tongue does not utter the Holy Nam?"

The leper whose body is wasting away but whose thought-currents are in contact with Nam is far more fortunate than the man who has a beautiful body but is not in inner contact with Nam. The True Nam of the Saints is not outside. It is within our own body. Guru Amar Das says:

> "He who seeks the Lord not within but without
> Does not find Nam and is led to suffer pain."

Those who look for Nam outside their bodies do not find it. If something is inside the house, how can we ever find it by searching for it outside?

Simran and Dhyan

Our spiritual journey begins from the soles of our feet and ends at the top of our head. This journey has two stages—one up to the eyes and the other above the eyes. The seat of the soul and the mind in our body lies behind our two eyes. Muslims call this point Nukta-i-Saveda. The sages and seers of ancient India called it Shiv-Netar or Divya-Chakshoo. Guru Nanak called it Til or Tisra-Til.

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Whenever we have to remember a thing that we have forgotten, our hand instinctively goes to our forehead—never to our legs or feet. The point between and

behind the two eyes is vitally connected with our thinking. Everybody's attention descends from this point and spreads out into the world through the nine portals of the body. Guru Nanak says:

> "Moment after moment the mind wanders;
> Away from its center it ever strays."

We constantly wander away into the world from the Third Eye, and our mind does not remain still even for an instant. So long as it does not cease this wandering, it can never go back to its source in Trikuti, the second spiritual region.

The nine portals or apertures of the body are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth and the two lower apertures. Our thought-currents flow out into the whole world through these apertures. Even if we were to sit in a dark room and lock the door, our mind would not stay locked up in the room. It would wander away into the whole world. The mind's constant habit of thinking of worldly affairs, people and things is called Simran (repetition) by the Masters. Everybody has this natural habit. When we begin to think of our domestic problems, our minds are filled with thoughts of them. When we think of other people, their forms come to stand before our eyes. When we think of our children, their forms come before us. This thinking of and visualizing others is called Dhyan (contemplation) by the Masters. We begin to see in our mind's eye those we think of often and as the habit of thinking of them grows stronger, we begin to be attached to, and love, them. In course of time, the mind develops so much affinity and association with them that we begin to see them even in our dreams, and at the time of our death their shapes and

forms will stand vividly before our eyes. If we think at that last moment of some worldly person, place or thing, we will return to be with it, because our love and attachment for it will take us back into the world of phenomena.

Saints or Masters explain that as we are already in the habit of Simran and Dhyan, we should make the best use of this natural habit. Contemplation of transient and the short-lived objects and attachment to them brings us back to this world of tragedy and tears. But if we contemplate the Eternal we will attain the Eternal, of which our soul is a particle and with which it wishes to merge. Guru Nanak says:

> "Eternal only is the deathless God;
> And he who dwells upon Him
> Becomes eternal too."

The Lord is permanent and eternal. He is birthless and deathless. Those who remember and always think of Him will also become immortal. They will end the cycle of births and deaths. We should, therefore, focus our attention behind the eyes by repetition of the Lord's Name, and should keep it there by turning our outward mental tendencies inward. This practice is so simple and easy that a child of five or a man of hundred years old can do it without difficulty. We have a natural habit of doing Simran. We have merely to change it from Simran of the world and its objects to Simran of the Lord—from the transient to the Eternal. When, as a result of this, our thought-currents are reversed and become concentrated at the Third Eye, they will at first not stay there, because they have the habit of dropping down and wandering out into the world through the nine openings. It is difficult to make the mind still in dark-

ness and in emptiness, unless we give it some form upon which to contemplate.

The question arises, therefore, on what form it should contemplate? It is an important matter and needs careful consideration, because one can become strongly attached to whatever form the mind contemplates upon. Bound by love for that form, the mind will go wherever the form goes. We must do our best, therefore, to determine the object or form that is most worthy of our worship and contemplation.

The world and its objects, the Saints tell us, are all constituted of five elements, namely, water, earth, fire, air and ether. Everything contains one or more of them. Man, who has been called the "darling" of the universe and the top of the creation, whom God made in His own image, the microcosm that holds the macrocosm, the pot of clay that has God within it, has all the five elements. He is a doll, so to say, fabricated out of them. The first category of created things has only one element, namely, water, and comprises the entire vegetable kingdom. If we, who possess five elements worship plants and trees, we will make no spiritual progress, since worshipping them will bring us back to plant life. Therefore, objects belonging to the plant and vegetable kingdom are not worthy of our worship and contemplation. The second category of created things is that of the insects and reptiles. They have two elements active in them, namely, the insects-fire and air, and the reptiles -earth and fire. They also, therefore, are not fit for our worship. The third class is that of the birds, which have three active elements, namely, water, fire and air. If we were to worship birds, we would doubtless become birds in a subsequent life, with the result that our aim of rising to a higher level than man would be defeated. The fourth

category is comprised of animals, which lack only the element of ether, possession of which would give them the power of discrimination. Thus cows, horses and the like do not merit our worship either. The fifth category is that of human beings themselves, who have in them all the five elements.

One is naturally prompted to ask why one man should worship another, particularly, in the present democratic order of things in which all people are said to have equal rights. Nobody has seen any of the many gods and goddesses, so no one can contemplate on their real forms. We cannot understand the speech of animals, so they are not able to give us spiritual guidance. No one knows the form of God. Because of this many people become atheists. We are puzzled about what or whom we should worship. Saints solve this problem by giving us an illustration that is easy for us to understand.

If there are in a room a number of radio sets which are not connected with batteries or electricity, no matter how much we tune them in, we can never make them give us news or music from any country. If, however, we connect them with batteries or electricity, we can tune them in to give us news or music from anywhere in the world. In the same manner, we have to find a God-man who has His body on earth but His soul in heaven, and who is therefore constantly in communion with the Lord. Then, by contemplating on Him and loving Him, we can, so to say, tune in to His spiritual power and ultimately become part of the same Lord. It is these God-men who are worthy of our worship. Guru Nanak says, "Contemplate within on the Guru's form." And again, He says:

> "The Sages and Saints are embodiments of the everlasting;
> Their form alone should be contemplated within."

Swami Ji says:

> "Dear friend, contemplate on the Guru's form;
> Without that there is no liberation from bondage."

Christ also gives the same teaching when He says,

> "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent me"
> (John 12:59).

Through contemplation on the form of the Master, we go back and merge in the Lord. The drop joins the ocean and becomes the ocean. Through contemplation the mind becomes used to staying at the eye focus or Third Eye. We should, the Saints tell us, contemplate on the form of the Master who initiates us.

When we become concentrated and one-pointed at the eye focus, we discover for ourselves that there is a sweet melody or sound there which emanates from the house of the Lord. This sweet melody is the heritage of all mankind, whether they are rich or poor, young or old, man or woman. Everyone has an equal right to it. Whether one is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian or a Sikh, he alone is on the right path who focuses his attention at the Third Eye and contacts this Divine Melody.

The Saints or Masters call this practice "dying while living", for by withdrawing our consciousness to the Third Eye and listening to the music of the Sound Current or Audible Life Stream, the mind and the soul come out of the tomb of the body and become free from it. They then cut asunder their attachment with the world and, forgetting the troubles and miseries of the world, enjoy eternal bliss. Kabir Sahib says:

> "Death is, for the world, the greatest fear,
> But the prospect of it fills my heart with bliss."

Guru Nanak says:

> "Die a living death;
> Such is the Yoga at which one should labor."

Similarly, St. Paul says in the Bible, "I die daily" (I Corinthians 15:31). The Muslim scriptures also bring about the same point, saying, "Die before thy death." Dadu, a celebrated Saint, writes in His Bani or Teachings:

> "Live on as a living corpse;
> Then will you behold the Lord.
> Die thou, O Dadu, ere
> The messengers of death arrive;
> What uncommon is there in dying
> As the others do?"

Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

> "Through service of the Guru
> Is the spirit purified
> And cleansed of dirt and dust;
> Then die a living death
> *By merging in the Lord.*"

Darya Sahib, another Saint, says:

> "Darya met the Great Master
> Who destroyed all his sins
> By giving him the true Shabd
> Instead of the false one he had before."

Guru Nanak brings out the same point when He says:

> "The darkness of ignorance is dispelled;
> And the lotus of the heart blossoms;
> In the Guru's word there is great joy and comfort;
> In His Grace, fulfilment of the heart's desires."

The divine melody which resounds at the eye focus in all human beings is called Shabd or Nam by the Saints. Different world religions may have different rites and rituals, but their underlying Principle, the essence of Spirituality, the absolute Reality, the basi

Truth, is the same in all of them. Their shells may be different, but the kernel in all of them is the same. The same golden thread runs through all of them. It is this "golden thread" which different Saints or Masters, at different times and in different countries, have described in various ways. Their words may be different, but they speak of the same ancient wisdom.

The real purpose of Dhyan or contemplation on the form of the Master is to assimilate the universal, timeless and eternal teaching, namely, to join the soul with the immanent power of the Shabd or Nam, usually called in English the Sound Current or the Audible Life Stream. This immanent Power recognises no caste, creed or color, nor any geographical boundaries. We must not get caught in the meshes of words and miss the Reality that the words seek to describe. The maze of words is like a pathless jungle, in which the mind wanders unguided and aimlessly. We must not run after the shadow and miss the substance : we must not pursue a mirage and remain forever thirsty. We must concentrate at the eye focus where the Divine Melody constantly resounds. Guru Nanak says :

> "He who closes his nine doors,
> Makes still his wandering mind,
> And enters through the tenth door into himself,
> Hears day and night the unstruck Music
> By following the Guru's advice."

It is only when we leave the nine portals of the body and bring our thought-currents to the eye focus that we reach the gateway to the Lord's Mansion. Our real home is Sach Khand (the region of Truth, the fifth spiritual region), where resides our Lord. The entrance to it is at the Third Eye and it can be easily recognised,

because at that point there resounds the Sound Eternal, the Music of the Spheres, the Audible Life Stream. So long as we remain away from this point and do not catch hold of the Sound Current, salvation remains a distant dream. Christ refers to this point when He says:

> "Seek and ye shall find,
> Knock and it shall be opened unto you."
>
> Matthew 7:7

The Inner Path

If we wish to enter our house, we must first try to find its door. The door of our real Home is behind the eyes in Tisra Til, the Third Eye or Single Eye. To open it, we have to knock repeatedly at that door. This knocking on the door means that we reverse the flow of our scattered attention and focus it at the eye center. When, by doing this repeatedly, the thought-currents become concentrated at the Third Eye, the door opens and we cross the threshold of the house.

The path opens up when we connect our consciousness with the Divine Melody, and this path leads us Home. Tulsi Sahib says:

> "Listen with attention in the real Ka'aba's arch;
> A voice from the Highest calls thee to rise up."

Muslims believe that the Haj or the pilgrimage to the Ka'aba in Mecca brings them salvation. Tulsi Sahib says that the real Ka'aba is the human body. Our Haj begins at the soles of our feet and ends at the top of our head. This Haj has two stages—one up to the eyes and the other above the eyes. In Mecca a Muslim priest stands in the arch of the Ka'aba and cries aloud for the Lord. Our forehead has the same design as the Ka'aba's arch. The Kalma or Sound Current that

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emanates from the House of the Lord is constantly ringing there. When we come into contact with this Sound and follow it up, we reach our destination, our True Home. Guru Amar Das says:

> "In this body are multitudes of things,
> But one sees them only when one meets the Guru.
> And closing one's nine doors
> Enters into the Tenth door.
> One is thus emancipated,
> And hears the music of the Divine Melody."

This body of ours is not merely a doll five or six feet long, nor does it merely consist of blood, flesh and bones. The Lord has kept countless treasures hidden within it. Even the Lord Himself lives in it. But so long as we do not meet a Perfect Master, we are not in a position either to carry out research in the body or to meet the Lord. In the part of the body below the eyes the sensual pleassures flow. So long as we keep our attention confined to this part, the question of salvation does not arise at all, for the gateway to salvation lies above the eyes where the Divine Melody resounds. Guru Nanak says:

> "If the seeker is once attached to the Shabd,
> It never leaves him and he reaches God."

When by the grace of the Perfect Master we are brought into the magnetic field of the Word or Logos, it pulls us towards itself and draws us upward to the Lord. With the help of the Sound we must find the direction of our True Home, and with the help of its Light, we are to follow the Path to it. The soul's power of seeing is called Nirat, and its power of hearing is called Surat. Surat hears the Sound or Shabd, and Nirat sees its Radiance.

For example, if we take a walk at night and lose our

way in the darkness, we stand perfectly still and try to see if we can hear any sound coming from the direction of our house. It may be the barking of a dog or the sound of a radio, or any other sound. With the help of this sound we are able to determine the direction of our house. But we then need a light of some kind to show the way and help us to avoid thorny bushes, uneven ground and other hazards.

In the same way the Saints tell us that the Lord has provided both Sound and Light in each one of us to enable us to reach His Mansion. With the Sound we are to determine the direction and with the Light complete our spiritual journey Home. Kabir Sahib says:

> "The Flame of the inaccessible region
> Burns without wick or oil."

Paltu Sahib tells of his experience thus:

> "There is in the sky an inverted well;
> A flame keeps burning within it day and night.
> Forever burns this Flame and needs no wick nor oil.
> Day and night it burns, and all the year round;
> Through the cycle of the changing seasons
> It knows no change."

Paltu Sahib calls the upper part of our head an "inverted well." It is, therefore, just the opposite of a real well. He tells us that when we withdraw our soul-force from the nine portals of the body and concentrate it at the eye-focus, we enter into the inverted well. At this point, in every human being, there burns a flame which needs no wick or oil, unlike the lights we use outside which need both wick and oil. This inner flame keeps burning throughout all the twenty-four hours of the day and night and throughout all the changing seasons of the year. It goes out only when a person dies. Swami Ji

says:

"When you concentrate at the eye-focus
And become one-pointed and single-eyed;
Then duality drops away
And you behold the divine Flame."

When we step out of the nine apertures of the body, we leave behind duality and have the experience of oneness. While living within the bounds of these nine apertures, that is, being attached to the world alone and of the world, we are entangled in the network of duality. But when we focus our attention behind the eyes, we lose our duality and see the Flame.

Christ says in the Bible, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." (Matthew 6:22). That is to say, when you collect your attention behind the eyes, your body will be filled with the radiance of the inner Light. Guru Nanak says:

"The strains of Bani (the Word)
Come from deep within the Flame;
Those who see the Flame and hear the Word,
Attach themselves to the Lord."

Every human being has this Flame burning within him. There issues forth from it a sweet and captivating music. Whoever beholds this Flame and listens to the Celestial Music, loses interest in the world and develops love for the Lord.

We know that lights are lit and bells and conches are used in all places of worship, such as temples, mosques, churches and Sikh gurdwaras. Inside a church, candles are lighted, and in its steeple there is a bell. Similarly, we find in a Buddhist temple that a flame is kept burning all the time at the altar. Bud-

dhists call it the "eternal flame", and the monks never let it die out. But the Immortal Flame that Lord Buddha speaks of is inside each one of us. Hindus, Sikhs and Jains burn lights, ring bells and blow conches in their temples. Muslims burn lights at night over their tombs and Muslim priests call loudly to the faithful for prayers and worship.

It has perhaps never occurred to us to ask why all our religious places have the same symbols of sound and light. In reality, all Saints and Masters have emphasized the fact that the human body is the only true temple, true mosque or true church, and it is in this house of worship that there burns a Flame and echoes a Divine Music, which sounds at first like the bell and the conch, and purifies all who give their attention to it.

But on the departure of these Saviours of mankind, we tend to forget or misinterpret their teachings and instead of turning inwards and seeing the Light and hearing the Music, we take to ceremonies and rituals, which are of no help. It is only by going inside that our mind becomes bound and subdued, and releases the soul from its grip. Guru Amar Das explains:

"By applying the collyrium of the Guru's Word,
The darkness of my ignorance was dispelled.
A light shone forth within,
And the darkness melted away.
The light of the inner Flame
Led me to His Kingdom."

When we follow the example of the God-men and put the collyrium of the Shabd in our eyes, we put an end to darkness and ignorance and behold within ourselves the refulgence of the Lord. In India it is customary to recommend collyrium or powdered antimony for weak eye-sight, and it is believed that by its use one's

eye-sight is restored to normal. It is for this reason that Guru Amar Das illustrates His point in this manner.

In spite of our eyes we are blind, because we see utter darkness within ourselves. But if we use the collyrium of the Word, that is to say, concentrate our consciousness at the Third Eye and unite it with the Word, we will rid ourselves of the darkness and behold the Flame within. Upon seeing the Flame the mind will become calm and motionless.

At present the mind dances to the tune of the senses. They have completely enslaved it. But when the mind becomes completely absorbed in the inner Light, constantly hears the sound of the Divine Music and thereby reaches its own place of origin, namely Trikuti, our soul will be released from its vicious grip. Realizing then that it is of the essence of the Lord, it will go and merge in the Lord. It is only then that it wins true honor and glory in the Court of the Lord.

Christ says in the Bible, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). That is to say, His purpose in coming into this world was to make people, who have eyes but do not see the Lord, blind to the world and its objects, and to make them turn Godward and see Him. Guru Nanak says:

> "They who hear the Word
> Know their real self
> And are emancipated."

Those who get in touch with the Word and know and hear the Word are alone capable of knowing the Path that leads to God. To know the Word is to know God. He further says:

> "Self-realization comes
> Only after knowing the delights of the Word."

We are able to recognise ourselves only when we get the taste of Nam or the Word, and by this means remove little by little all the coverings over our soul. The Saints show us the path that enables us to join our soul-currents with the music of the Word. Says Guru Nanak:

> "Merge yourself with the Shabd;
> That is the real death;
> He who dies thus will not have to die again."

Swami Ji also explains:

> "Let your spirit be dyed in the color of the Word;
> Then you will be able to enter
> Your true and eternal abode."

Saints describe the glory of Nam in holy books and scriptures. By studying them we come to know why it is necessary for us to practise Nam and how this is to be done. But the scriptures do not contain Nam. They only reveal the method of obtaining it. Salvation does not come by reading them. It becomes a reality only when we practise whatever we have read. Medical books describe methods of curing various diseases, but they do not themselves contain medicines. Even if a patient with some disease were to read books on medicine all day long he would not be cured. If, however, he prepares a medicine according to the prescription given in the book and then uses it, he can soon be healthy again. Thus, a book on medicine is one thing, and the medicine itself is quite another.

Similarly, if a person were to read all day long a book on cookery which gives recipes for making a variety of dishes, he would neither be able to taste them nor satisfy his hunger. When, however, he prepares food according to the directions given in the book, he tastes the food and also fills his stomach. If one has to under-

take a journey by train, he first carefully consults the railway guide. This tells him the length of the journey, the stations that he will pass on the way, the amount of the train fare, and so on. By merely reading the guide, however, we do not reach our destination. It is only when we go to the railway station, buy a ticket and get into the train, that we are able to reach our destination.

Theoretical knowledge of a subject can never take the place of actual experience. We regard the reading of holy books or the recital of them as a means of salvation. Not infrequently we do not even read the scriptures ourselves, but have it done by a priest. This is not all. While the reading is going on in our house, we are ourselves engaged in our daily chores. In fact, we may become vain and think that the reading of scriptures in this way is certain to win for us great merit.

If we were to ourselves read and understand the teachings of the Saints and Masters, we would become conscious of our weaknesses and shortcomings. There would then grow in us a longing to remove our weaknesses and to learn the method of God-realization. Such an attentive reading would, of course, be beneficial. On the contrary, however, we have made a ritual of the reading of holy books by a priest, and we imagine, foolishly enough, that the reading done by a priest will bring salvation to us, as it were, by proxy.

You may find many noble sentiments in the scriptures, but you cannot attain devotion simply by reading them. Such reading is like churning water, from which no butter can ever be produced. Saints take us out of the maze of such false hopes and foolish consolations. Swami Ji says:

> "By a mere reading of the Vedas, Shastras and Puranas
> The pandits come to grief.

> Without the Satguru and without Nam,
> No one has ever crossed the ocean of this world."

Similarly, Guru Nanak says:

> "Read thou book after book, year after year;
> Month after month, read on,
> To study give thy life, and thus waste
> All thy breaths,
> 'Tis all in vain!
> But one thing of real import should'st thou hear,
> One act alone,[1] O Nanak, is of any worth
> And every other act
> *Is but folly and error of the ego."*

That is to say, if we were to read throughout the whole day, the whole month, the whole year, nay, the whole of our life, there would be only one thing that would be credited to our account, and that would be whether or not our Surat (Soul) is united with the Shabd. Otherwise, all our reading would be absolutely futile.

> "The nine (works of grammar), the eighteen (Puranas), and the four (Vedas),
> And then the six (systems of philosophy)—I, read them all,
> But they will never give to you
> Real understanding of the root of things.
> I never listened to the Inner Sound,
> My soul found never its True Image.
> Like the bird in the fable,
> My life was spent in imitation." Tulsi Sahib

If one reads the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas, the nine works of Grammar and the six systems of *Philosophy, but does not gain any knowledge of* Surat-Shabd Yoga, he will be no better off than the foolish bird which only knew how to imitate other birds. The scriptures remain a string of empty words unless they

[1]*Attaching the soul to the Word.*

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lead to the Reality they describe. At another place, says this Saint:

> "The reading of tomes has lighted
> The path to death for all the world,
> Not to true wisdom.
> The true pandit is he who has read
> The brief book of Love."

Bulleh Shah says:

> "Close tight, O friend, these barren books of knowledge,
> Naught but Name of God shouldst thou acknowledge."

Christ says in the Bible, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25).

In other words, He says, "O Lord, I am very grateful to You that You have kept this great Wisdom away from the worldly-wise and intellectual people, and have revealed its secret only to those who are as innocent as little children."

By reading scriptures and holy books we gain only some theoretical knowledge. The endless discussions of the philosophers are no more than a spider's web that entangles one and prevents one's escape. We sometimes develop the habit of intellectual sophistication and argument. We may begin to pride ourselves on being great scholars and intellectuals, and regard others as illiterate and ignorant. We may become vain and egotistic. But on the Path of God-realization, one must become unlettered like a child. Reading is like cleaning a bowl; but if one's whole life is spent only in cleaning and nothing is put into the bowl, it is, actually, a waste of time. The dirty bowl of our mind must be cleaned so that we can fill it with the Divine Nectar.

Our scriptures are records of the experiences of sages and seers, prophets and Saints, who worked very hard and spent many sleepless nights in order to meet their Beloved, the Supreme Lord. Saints and Masters have described in these books for our own benefit the things that they saw within and the obstacles that they came across during their spiritual ascent. The books tell of their actual experiences. By merely reading them, however, we cannot enjoy the experiences they had. If we do not put into practice what we read in the holy books, and do not search within ourselves, reading them can be of little help. The object of our spiritual search is to merge our consciousness with the Immanent Sound of Divine Power that resounds within all human beings. This power is the heritage of all mankind; it is within each and every human body. It has been put there for our use, but the way to reach it is in the keeping of the Saint. Guru Nanak says:

> "The treasure of the Word is hidden within us,
> And the key to it is in the hands of the Saints."

He says again:

> "He who created this body, this house of clay,
> Has locked it from within and to the Guru has entrusted the key.
> Without the Guru the treasure within
> Is never gained, even though you may try to gain it
> In endless ways."

The Company of the Saints

The Lord who created us, has kept the treasure of Nam within us. But its secret is known only to the Perfect Masters. We must, therefore, go to Saints and be in their company to gain the wealth of Nam. Guru Amar Das says:

> "Without the merciful Guru,

One does not reach the Lord
Even if one does innumerable deeds."

Guru Arjan Dev says:

"This is what the Lord has revealed to me :
That without the Guru, O Nanak,
No one gains salvation."

Guru Nanak says:

"In the service of the Guru
There is bliss forever;
The Guru helped me to behold
The Lord invisible."

Guru Arjan again says:

"Let no one in this world be deluded;
Without help from the Guru
There is no crossing of the Ocean of Existence."

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru, says:

"Listen, O seekers!
Harken unto me, O brother!
Boldly and with complete confidence
The Guru declares :
If you seek the eternal bliss
Which flows from the spirit within,
Come and surrender yourself
Body and soul to me."

All Saints or Masters place great emphasis on the value of being in the company of Masters. Without association with them, they say, there is no possibility of release from birth and death.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, writes:

"The Vedas, the Smritis and the holy scriptures
All these have I studied;
The message of all is the same:
No one can attain salvation without the Guru.
Careful reflection will convince you
That this is true."

At another place, He states:

"No one can gain (this treasure)
Without help from the Guru :
Such is the Law of the Creator."

The Lord created as a natural law the fact that whenever He meets anyone He does so through one of the Saints. In this connection, Christ says in the Bible:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor
And are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28.

Then again He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him." (John 14:6,7). That is to say, "You can meet the Father only through me. I am the only means and the only way. If you recognise me, you have recognised the Lord and seen Him."

He further says, "And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me" (John 12:45). At another place He says, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life" (John 8:12). Tulsi Sahib brings out the same point in His teachings:

"There are in this world, O Tulsi,
Five jewels of the purest worth!
Association with the Enlightened Ones,
Complete self-surrender at the feet of the Satguru,
Doing good to others, humanity and charity."

He says further:

"As gold is free from rust
And iron is not eaten by white ants,
In the same way the Guru's disciple,
Whether he be good or bad,
Is never sent to hell."

Swami Ji also mentions the importance of keeping the company of the Saints, saying:

"The human birth once lost is lost forever;
In the wilderness of the 'Eighty-four',
You will have to roam thereafter.
Serve the Guru to win His pleasure,
And to that end direct all your activities.
Stand firm in the realization
That save the Guru you have no real friend—..
No, not a soul whom you may call your own."

And again He says:

"That treasure no one can find
Without the Guru's grace,
And without listening to the Shabd within:
Raise up your soul and make your way up to heavenly worlds,
Keeping the mind engaged in listening
To the strains of the Sacred Sound within:
Such is the way to be followed."

Kabir Sahib also speaks of the supreme importance of association with the Saints or Perfect Masters:

"The soul whose life is spent
Without devotion to the Guru
Will take birth as a bitch;
From street to street she will wander
And nobody will care to throw her a crumb of bread.
And if a monarch dies without this true devotion,
He will again return to earth, but as an ass.
The potter will load him down with heavy clay,
And no one will give him so much as a blade of grass to eat.
The man who prides himself on his fine clothes,
And wastes his time in frivolous enjoyments,
Is bound most surely for the land
Of the messengers of death.
Let every man, O Kabir, devote himself
To love and service of the Guru."

Kabir further says:

"The counting of rosary beads,
The giving of alms,
All these are meaningless without the Guru.
The Vedas and Puranas will confirm
That giving alms, unless it is done
Under the direction of the Guru
Is an act of sin and harm."

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru, writes:

"Unworthy of man's estate and prisoners of Kal are they
Who have never had the great good fortune
Of coming into contact with the Guru.
Time and again will they be born on the earth plane;
In refuse will they live like worms."

He further states:

"*Except the Guru there is none*
Who can help the sickly sinner to save his soul.
The disease of egotism will bring him again to earth.
No one can cross to eternal life on the other side,
Unless he repeats, with the help of the Guru,
The name of Hari (God)."

Those who do not meet a Perfect Master or Saint are indeed most unfortunate. They always remain under the sway of Kal, the negative power. They have to undergo repeated births and deaths and endure much suffering and misery. They may even have to incarnate as worms. Those who do not find or seek a Perfect Master can never contact Nam, and according to their karmas will move from one body to another in the prison of this world, undergoing untold misery all the time. Relatively, in fact, when they are in this world they are really more dead than alive. Guru Nanak says:

"He who does not serve the Guru,
And does not love the Name of God,

Should not be looked upon
As a living human being,
For he is truly God-forsaken
And his soul is dead."

Everybody is in search of happiness and peace and tries to find them in different worldly things, people and places. But real happiness lies in Nam or the Word and we can contact Nam only with the help of a perfect Saint. If we do not have the company of a Saint, even though Nam is within us and is our heritage or patrimony, we can never discover its transcendent, true and pure Music. We should, therefore, try to find a perfect Saint so that He may put us in touch with the Shabd. Nothing else can ever bring us lasting peace and bliss. Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

"The man who has a million women
His lust to gratify,
And rules as monarch of the regions nine,
Without a perfect Guru he will find
No happiness, but will be born
In countless bodies on this earth."

Bulleh Shah says in His outright fashion:

"Without the perfect Guru, Bulleh Shah,
All your praying has been done in vain."

He says further:

"O harken to the words of Bulleh Shah :
My coming to the Guru showed me the true Path;
And then my soul was cleansed of every sin.
What more is there to say?"

Saints do not have to give us anything from outside. The transcendent wealth of Nam is within us, and has been kept there for us by the Lord. It must be found within our own selves. The Saints have only to point the way and reveal the method of finding it.

The power of learning, for example, is within all of us. But for the most part it lies dormant until we go to school and college. Then, if we listen attentively to what the teacher says and diligently carry out the work assigned by him, the latent power of learning is awakened and we become doctors, engineers, or scholars. In the case of students who because of fear of their teacher become truants and fail to attend classes, the power of learning, though it is present in them, continues to remain dormant. It is the association with our teachers and our own efforts to learn that develops our intellect.

Take another example. We all know that milk has ghee (purified butter) in it, but if we do not know the method how to make ghee, we can never get ghee out of the milk. Ghee can always be obtained from milk, but it cannot be obtained without using the appropriate method. Guru Nanak says:

"Just as fire is in wood
And can be produced with skill,
So is the flame of Ram Nam (the Name of God) in every human being,
And can be uncovered through the Guru's Wisdom."

There is fire in wood, but we do not see it nor can we make use of it. When, however, we rub one piece of wood against another, fire is produced. We can then both see it and make use of it. Even so is the Light of the Word within each one of us. When we follow the directions given by the Saints or Masters, we see it. Guru Nanak explains this by giving another illustration:

"Within your own home, within the body,
There is a treasure-house of rubies, gems and jewels;
But the mind is in illusion and cannot find it.

Should not be looked upon
As a living human being,
For he is truly God-forsaken
And his soul is dead."

Everybody is in search of happiness and peace and tries to find them in different worldly things, people and places. But real happiness lies in Nam or the Word and we can contact Nam only with the help of a perfect Saint. If we do not have the company of a Saint, even though Nam is within us and is our heritage or patrimony, we can never discover its transcendent, true and pure Music. We should, therefore, try to find a perfect Saint so that He may put us in touch with the Shabd. Nothing else can ever bring us lasting peace and bliss. Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

"The man who has a million women
His lust to gratify,
And rules as monarch of the regions nine,
Without a perfect Guru he will find
No happiness, but will be born
In countless bodies on this earth."

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The Guru alone can show what is within,
Like the water-diviner who can in a single moment
Locate an old well hidden from common sight."

In our body the Lord has kept the numerous treasures of Nam, but our mind wanders about outside the body in doubt and delusion. So long as it does not go within and make a thorough search for the treasures, it can never find them. For example, in old villages there are often old wells that have been covered over. We may even walk over them without knowing that they are there, but the water-diviners through their special skill tell us where to dig and we then find the ready-made wells. The diviners do not actually dig the wells. The wells are already there and the water-diviners simply tell us where to dig. Similarly, the Lord resides in the inner recesses of our heart and the way to Him lies within the human body. Saints simply show us the path, and we must seek their guidance.

Our mind is quick to take on the attributes of the company it keeps. It is dyed in the hue of its associations. When one has the company of Saints and Godmen, one loses interest in the show of the world and develops love of the Lord. By this means sinners become Saints, the wicked become virtuous, the greedy become contented. Guru Nanak says:

"The wordly man, with mind confused
Is like a tangled skein of thread
Which cannot be woven as such into cloth.
Not much of value will come from this skein.
We should avoid the company of such men."

If yarn is tangled, it can never be woven into cloth. Even so is the manmukh (worldly man) whose mind is entangled in the world and its sense pleasures can never turn Godwards. Guru Nanak says further:

"The man with worldly cravings is never satisfied;
The hunger of desire gnaws ever at his heart,
And he is therefore always discontented.
He is always on the run, ever lured on and on,
Stricken with the worship of possessions:
O seeker, let there be a distance of a million miles
Between a man of this kind and thyself."

Manmukhs or worldly men are avaricious and ever hungry. The Lord may grant them health, wealth, family and children, honor and glory, but they still do not ask for God Himself. Their desires and cravings are innumerable. One should completely avoid the company of people of this kind who are constantly running after the illusory pleasures of the world. Guru Nanak says again:

"O Lord grant us the company of the Saints
So that we may remember Thee."

The company of the Saints is an elixir that weans us away from all evil ways. Saints place great emphasis on the necessity of such company, since it is there that we come to know the relation between the soul and the Lord, the screen that hides one from the other, and the manner of removing that screen.

True Satsang dispels all doubts and disbelief. It frees us from evil thoughts and saves us from wicked actions. And what is Satsang? Satsang literally means a gathering or an association of the seekers of Truth. In this gathering, naturally, the seekers discuss the reality of Nam, the powers of the Guru, the role of Saints and Masters, and other matters concerning the spiritual path. In Satsang there is no room for rancour or ill will of any kind, no attempt or wish to belittle anybody or any religion. The sole purpose of Satsang is to engender in us real and deep love for the infinitely lovable

Lord and for the Guru, our real guide on the spiritual path, and to create in us an unwavering devotion to Nam. It is very wrong to tell people that they will suffer dire consequences if they do not worship God the way we wish them to. We should tell them gently and lovingly of whatever benefit we have derived by following the Path and say that if they consider it worth their while, they might also give it a trial. We should never quarrel with them over this matter. Guru Nanak says:

"Satsang is a sermon in which
Are expounded the esoteric secrets of Nam."

So long as a Perfect Master who is in communion with the Lord, who reveals to us the inner path of Shabd or the Word and who has the power to make others meet the Lord, is not present, there can be no true Satsang. Guru Nanak says:

"There is no friend save the Satguru,
And there is no Satsang without the Guru."

Kabir Sahib glorifies the Satsang of the Saints in these terms:

"Seek, O Kabir, the company of the enlightened ones,
Even if they can offer you only coarse millet to eat;
And shun the company of the worldly man
Even if he should offer you a banquet of the most
delicious food."

He further says:

"Precious as gold is the company of Saints,
One moment, half a moment;
Half, even of that, of such company
Is enough to burn to ashes
A multitude of sins.",

Swami Ji counsels:

"Of all your close companions not one,
Nay, not a single one, is your true friend.

Why do you sleep the sleep of ignorance
And stay in the company of all these thugs?
Shake off this heavy slumber
And cultivate love for Satsang.
Do this and the Guru will awaken
An intense longing for Nam within your heart."

At another place He says:

"Why do you stay here in this world, O brother?
What profit is there in your wandering about
In this world as you now are doing?
Be warned and never forget
That your true business is to go to Satsang.
And seek therein true wealth."

Maulana Rum, a celebrated Persian mystic, says:

"One moment spent in the company of the Saints
Is better far than the purest devotion of a hundred years.

The Master and The Lord

If our destination lies to the east, and we run to the west, we naturally get farther away from our goal. The only purpose of Satsang is to create in us love for the Lord, and to impress upon us that the real form of the Satguru is Shabd or Nam. Saints emerge from the ocean of Nam, and after their earthly sojourn go back and merge into the same ocean again. They assume the human form because man can have only another man as his teacher. Nobody has seen gods and goddesses. Nor does anybody know the form of God. Unless a man who is like ourselves teaches us, we cannot understand anything about the Lord. Christ called Saints "the Word made Flesh". When the Word takes the form of a man, that man becomes a living Master. The Lord and the Word are one and the same thing. Thus, Christ says in the Bible, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30). "The Word was with God, and

the Word was God" (John 1:1). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14). Similarly, Guru Nanak says:

> "The devotee of the Lord (the Master) is like the Lord,
> Make no distinction between them because of form;
> The Masters are just like waves that rise in the ocean
> And merge back into it again."

Christ further says:

> "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28).

There is no difference between the Lord and the Masters, who are His devotees. By worshipping God, they become God. The Shruti (Hindu holy writings) says, "Those who know Brahm become Brahm." Just as waves rise in the sea for a moment and then merge back into it again, even so the lovers of the Lord are waves of the ocean of divinity, and after finishing their mission of mercy, they merge back into the ocean. The relation of the Saint with the Lord is the same as that of the waves to the sea. Every Saint is a wave of the ocean of Sat Nam. They come into this world and after joining our consciousness with Nam, they take us with them and merge back into the same ocean. In fact, when the Lord wishes to free us from the chains of birth and rebirth, He comes in the form of a Perfect Master and by joining our consciousness with the Shabd, merges us back into Himself.

Guru Nanak says:

> "The Master and the Lord are one,
> There is no difference between the two.
> The Lord is the real form of the Master,
> And the Master in human form is the Lord.
> Unless the Lord takes the human form,
> And comes to our level in the form of a Master,

He cannot make any true contact with us.
The Lord speaks in the Master."

Again He says:

"Through the Guru, God manifesteth Himself."

And again:

"In the true Guru is the essence of the Lord,
And revealing it, He proclaims it to all."

At another place Guru Nanak says:

"By churning the ocean of the body,
I have discovered a marvellous thing.
The Guru is God, and God is the Guru.
Between them, O Nanak,
There is no difference."

By making a thorough search within the body, He says, He discovered that the Master and the Lord are one and the same, and there is no difference between them. He further says:

"Know the Guru and the Lord to be one."

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

"That great Lord has put us out,
And shut Himself behind fast closed doors;
Then concealed in the cloak of man
Cometh He to open the door."

Maulana Rum states:

"The light of God manifesteth itself in the Saints,
And it is from them that thou learnest how to behold it."

Bulleh Shah also explains:

"God cometh in the form of man,
And cometh He to awaken the world."

Kabir Sahib also explains this same truth, saying

"Rama, the Lord, and Kabir
Are one and the same, alike,
But apparently are as two, apart.

Their duality bewilders only the man
Who has not yet found a True Guru."

Nam Dev says the same thing:

"The spirit of Divinity hath become flesh,
And liveth in the body;
In that body shouldst thou recognise Him.
Says Nam Dev: My very life I will lay down at His feet,
For only devotion to Him is of any worth."

Christ also says in the Bible, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." (John 14:11). He repeats it, "The Father is in me, and I in Him." (John 10:38). Swami Ji also states the same basic verity, saying:

"Radhasoami, the one Lord, God,
Descended to the earth plane,
Wearing the form of a man.
He came as a Guru and initiated souls
Into the mystery of Nam."

(Note: Radhasoami signifies the Supreme God).

The Guru does not entangle us in rites and rituals, but helps us to make contact with the Shabd or Nam. He shows us the way Home that lies within our own body. Guru Nanak says:

"Satguru is that wise man,
Who shows the disciple the inner spiritual realms
Within his own body.
The strains of the Melody of the Word,
Begin to resound within
As a sign of that enlightenment;
Five types of divine sound will be heard,
Each one resounding loudly."

Swami Ji also says:

"The Guru doth show within the body
The heavenly home of the soul;
And He reveals the secret
Of the five melodies that constitute the Shabd."

The Saints explain that there are five higher regions within, through which the sound passes to reach Sach Khand, the true or imperishable region, the house of the Lord. Christ also says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." (John 14:2). Each region has its own sound. A perfect Master takes our consciousness through the five regions, joins it with the five Names or divine Sounds, and leads us to the Lord's Mansion. In reality, the Shabd is *one*, but at every stage, it has a *different and distinctive sound and a distinctive light.*

For example, a river starts from its source and ultimately flows into the sea. But it makes different sounds at different places. At the source, it has one sound. When it passes through gorges or narrow valleys with steep sides it has another. When it is a waterfall, it has a different sound. When it spreads into the plains, its sound changes very greatly. And finally, when it flows into the sea, the sound is altogether different from the other sounds. The river however is all one. Kabir Sahib also mentions *the five sounds in His well-known* poem that begins, "Behold the beloved Lord is within you" and emphasizes the importance of our turning inward to find them.

Kabir also says:

> "Meditate on the Shabd, O Sadhu (Holy man)!
> Everything takes its birth from the Shabd;
> Go in and find shelter with this Shabd."

Maulana Rum says:

> "As you rise out of the six lower regions,
> And reach the seventh heaven,
> You will hear five different melodies."

Shamas-i-Tabriz also states:

> "Every day resound the five melodies
> From the door of the most High."

Hafiz similarly affirms:

n the sixth to the seventh sky ascend;
ill and with thine inward ear
ve to hear that heavenly harmony,
which the strains are five."

e Anand Sahib, which is a part of the Granth Sahib,
read:

"Great is his good fortune who
Hears the five melodies true;
Lucky the body inside of which
Forever sounds the Word;
Lucky the house in which forever dwells the Lord.
The five foes through His grace are driven out,
And Kal himself is vanquished, put to rout."

Kabir Sahib states:

"Work hard, O Sadhu!
For contact with Shabd within;
It was from Shabd that everything was created,
Try to catch and hold onto that Shabd."

Swami Ji says:

"Five names thou shouldst repeat,
Concentrate thy mind in Sham-swet (the Third Eye)."

e True Master

He alone is the true Master who leads us to our
Home by means of the five sounds. Swami Ji says
we should search for such a Master, who is Sha
carnate and practises Shabd:

"He who gives the message of Shabd is the true Gur
For Shabd is the real truth.
He who practises Shabd is the perfect Guru,
Be thou as dust beneath His feet.
Look not for any other marks,
Care not for any other qualities,
Seek instruction into the secret of Shabd
From such a Master.
And practise it with wholehearted devotion."

part of the Shabd or the Lord and makes us also a part of the Lord. Christ explained this truth when He told His disciples that they were merged in Him, and He was merged in God, therefore, they were also merged in God. He further explains, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him... He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:7,9).

Swami Ji says:

> "Get the secret of the Shabd from the Guru,
> And then merge wholly into it."

In reality, the real form of the Perfect Master is the Shabd, Word or Logos. It assumes the human form in order to be able to tell people the way back to the Lord. The body, both of the Master and of the disciple, is perishable. It will be left behind here. It will either be consigned to fire or earth. The disciple's real form is the soul, which ultimately will merge into the Shabd. Even after leaving His body, the Perfect Master continues to watch over His disciples. Christ says in the Bible, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter (Shabd), which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:25-26).

That is to say, "When I leave this mortal body, the Lord will manifest the Shabd in my Radiant Form within you, and then that Radiant Form will look after you and guide you."

The Guru is the Shabd. He is a link between man and God. He is the one that takes people back to the Lord. After fulfilling His allotted task He merges back into the Shabd. Likewise, the soul is also a ray of

Shabd, and through the grace of a Perfect Master it is enabled to return and unite itself with the Shabd. Guru Nanak says:

"The Guru is the Shabd, and the soul is its disciple."

The Saints of the past were doubtless Perfect Masters. But we cannot benefit from them now. We need a living Master of the present day. If a patient were to say that he would like to be treated by the famous Doctor Lukman, he would not receive any treatment. He must go to a living doctor. If a Sikh were to say that his case would be decided by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, this would not happen. He would have to seek justice from a living magistrate. If a woman were to wish to marry Raja Vikramaditya, her wish would remain unfulfilled. The need is for a living doctor, a living magistrate and a living husband. Likewise, we need a living Master. He alone can help us to cross the Ocean of Phenomena. Christ writes about John the Baptist in the Bible: "He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in His light." (John 5:35).

He then says very clearly about Himself: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day (during my lifetime); the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5).

A Perfect Master is needed so that in the form of a man He can explain everything to us clearly. If we could do without a living Master for God-realization then past Saints on whom we depend need not have taken the human form. They did their mission of mercy and went back to the Lord. A living teacher is an absolute necessity on the Path.

There are many books on the sciences of medicine

and engineering. The libraries are abundantly supplied with them. But we can find no one who has become a doctor or an engineer merely by reading these books. By associating with teachers for fifteen to twenty years and working hard, we gain knowledge and then put it into practice to get first-hand experience. Spirituality is a very involved and complex subject. As long as we do not have a real Guide who is thoroughly conversant with every detail of the spiritual regions, and can benefit from His experiences, we cannot move inward and upward at all.

True, our real Master is the Shabd, which is the heritage of all mankind. But we cannot catch hold of it unless we have a guide in human form to help us. Guru Nanak says:

> "Bani (the Word) is the Guru, and the real form
> Of the Guru Himself is Bani.
> The reservoir of Nectar—that too is found within the Bani.
> It is through the Guru's Bani, O disciple,
> That the soul is liberated.
> He who knows this secret,
> Is granted liberation by the Living Master."

The Master is the Shabd and the Shabd is the Master. The real nectar is in this Shabd. It is the Shabd to which the Master constantly refers. With loving devotion and unwavering faith, the disciple accepts what the Master teaches and connects his thought-currents with the in-dwelling Power of the Shabd.

There are two kinds of true Masters. The first are those who descend directly from Sach Khand and are Saints from the time of their birth. The second are those who reach Sach Khand through the grace of their Master by meditating upon Nam or Shabd, and thus

become Saints in their lifetime. When we take refuge with such a Master, He does not neglect us after initiating us, but is responsible for taking us back to our true Home. Guru Nanak says:

"The Guru ever keepeth me company."

He says further:

"No one can nullify the gifts given by the Guru.
Yea, he alone is ferried across
Whom the Lord forgiveth."

Christ also says in the Bible, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28).

Those who are so to say stamped by the Master or given Nam by Him, do not have to meet the angels of death and go with them. The Saints grant us that Nam or Shabd of which no one can deprive us. Swami Ji says:

"The Saint sows within the mind of the disciple
The seed of Nam.
Who then can have the power
To destroy that seed,
And to prevent it from sprouting?"

In the Bible Christ says with great emphasis, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35).

That is to say, "the sky and earth may vanish, but the Word revealed by me will last forever." Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, says:

"My Guru is Parmeshwar, the Lord God Himself,
And a source of happiness to me,
He gives me strength to stand firm
On the Path and Nam of Par-Brahm.
In my last moment,
He will help and befriend me."

Such Masters come to receive their disciples at the time of death. They do not allow the angels of death to touch them. The Master is our true friend and saviour, not only in this world but also in His Radiant Form in the next. Guru Nanak says:

> "He alone, O beloved, is our friend,
> Who goeth with us to the other world;
> And on the day of reckoning,
> He will stand by us as our surety."

Similarly, Guru Arjan Dev says:

> "Nanak, sever your relations with false friends,
> And find the Saint, your true friend;
> The former forsake you even while you are living,
> The latter does not leave you even at the time of death."

Most of our relations and friends leave us during our lifetime. But the Masters are our real friends and do not leave us even at the time of our death. They save us from the clutches of the angels of death. By coming under the protection of such Masters, our entire karmic account will be settled once and for all. Guru Nanak says:

> "He whose account has been taken upon himself by Nanak,
> All his records have been burnt and files destroyed
> In the Court of Dharam Rai—the Divine Judge."

He says further:

> "When the record of your deeds in the Court of Dharam Rai
> Has been destroyed,
> The messengers of death become powerless to harm you."

Still further He says:

> "All miseries disappear,
> And all poisons become harmless,
> When the repetition of Nam is done.
> Yea, even the records of that soul
> In the Court of Dharam Rai are destroyed."

At another place He says:

> "When the record of all my deeds has been destroyed,
> What action can Dharam Rai take against my spirit?"

Christ says in the Bible: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:28).

He further says, "He that heareth my Word.... hath everlasting life, and....is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24).

That is to say, those who are joined to the Shabd by a true Master, escape from the cycle of birth and rebirth and gain everlasting life.

Such Masters are rare, but they are always present in the world. In every age they come to reveal the Path to real seekers. Guru Nanak says:

> "The Gurmukh (Devotee) who has developed within him
> The secret power of Nam,
> Attains the status of a Satguru (true Master)
> From him the torch of Nam is carried forward
> By his disciples,
> From generation onto generation,
> To enlighten future ages"

The Perfect Masters are not the privilege of any one country, time or religion. They may appear in any country and be of any religion. Guru Nanak says:

> "From age to age,
> From generation to generation,
> Throughout the aeons,
> The Guru's spiritual successors carry forward
> The task of joining souls
> With Hari, the Lord."

At one time there can be more than one Perfect Saint. They are never a burden on society or on their nation. They earn their own living and take no pay-

ment for their services. Thus, Guru Nanak earned His living by farming at Kartarpur, and with His earnings took care of His family and children. He received no payment for serving the Sangat (the group of His disciples). Guru Nanak says:

> "If a Saint or a Seer goes a-begging
> Do not go near Him or fall at His feet.
> If He earns His own living,
> And gives part of it away,
> Says Nanak, He alone knows the Way."

If a Saint begs from His disciples, He is not a true Master. He should be avoided. He does not deserve respect or esteem. But the Saint who earns His own living, gives free service to the Sangat and who knows the Way is the kind of Master that one must find. Christ says in the Bible, "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8).

Kabir Sahib remained a weaver throughout His life, even though He had disciples such as the King of Bokhara, who could have provided Him with every comfort. He says:

> "It is for the disciple to offer himself
> Body and soul as a sacrifice at the Guru's feet;
> But the true Master will not touch a single penny
> That is offered to Him."

He further says:

> "For my own self I would never beg,
> Even if I were to die,
> But I do not hesitate to do so,
> If it must play a part
> In giving spiritual benefits to others."

The Saints use any money that may be given to them for the good of the world, so that honestly earned money is put to proper use. They never hold out their

ds to ask for money for their own use. Swami Ji
s:

"The Guru does not wish to receive money from you,
He is rich enough with the wealth of devotion.
The money He asks you to give,
Will earn spiritual merit for you,
For He will give it in charity, on your behalf,
To those who are suffering from hunger and thirst."

Saint Ravi Das was a cobbler. Raja Pipa, a Kshatriya Rajput and Mira Bai, the princess of Marwar, were among His disciples. It is said in the biography of Mira Bai that when her relatives once taunted her, saying that she lived in a palace while her Master was a cobbler, she could not bear it. As a result she took a large diamond to her Master and begged Him, "Please sell this diamond, buy a comfortable house, and live a life of honour and ease." Saint Ravi Das replied, "My daughter, I have no need for your diamond. I alread[y] have wealth so vast that it could not possibly b[e] estimated."

The true Masters set an example of how we, whi[le] living in this world and discharging our obligatio[ns] must devote ourselves to the Lord. They do not s[ay] that you should leave your home and family and go [to] forests or mountain caves. By going to such places do not increase our longing and love for the Lord, s[ince] the same desires and cravings that we now have will be with us there. Then, the moment we retur[n] and face the world, the mind will again make us [dance] to its tunes. Our condition actually becomes worse.

What do we need in this world? We need f[ood to] fill our stomach, clothing to cover our body, and [a roof over]head to protect ourselves against heat and co[ld]

the inclemencies of the weather. We can increase these wants or lessen them; but wherever we go these wants will follow us. Therefore, going to a forest or a mountain cave, makes no difference at all. Instead of white robes, we may wear orange ones; but whatever their colour, clothes we must wear. If we give up eating food in our own home, we will have to beg for it from others because food we still need. If we leave the comfort of our own home we will have to find shelter in caves or ashrams, because we will still need to have a roof over our head. We are not able to give up any of these things—clothing, food and shelter. If we do give them up, we become a burden on society and have to think of many different ways to get them. The Saints tell us that we should live bravely and valiantly in the world. We should not be caught in the trap or net of the world and its objects. Guru Nanak says:

> "As the lotus flower lives in water,
> But still it is not wet,
> As the duck keeps its wings dry;
> So should man live in this world,
> Attaching his spirit to the Shabd:
> In this way, O Nanak, he can cross
> This ocean of phenomena."

The lotus flower always remains on the surface of the water, although its roots are under it; the duck may be in water all day long but it is able to fly away with its wings dry. We should live in the world in the same way by connecting our soul with the Sound Current. If a bee sits on the rim of a cup filled with honey it can enjoy the sweet taste of the honey and can also fly away safely. But if it were to sit in the cup itself, it would lose the honey as well as its life.

Thus, we must live on the edge of the world as a

ator and not allow ourselves to be drowned in its
al pleasures. A newly wedded girl staying in the
e of her parents, serves her parents, plays with her
ds and companions, and carries out all her house-
d duties, yet her mind is always thinking of her hus-
nd and her love for him. Even so, we should live in
s world. While working out our karmic credits and
bits our attention should always be focussed on our
ve and devotion for our Master. The Saints, there-
re, advise us to live in our own home and earn our own
iving, and at the same time always remember the Lord
and search for a true Master or Saint, get the secret of
Nam from Him and then wholeheartedly practise it.

Guru Nanak says:

> "Seek, O brothers, the perfect Gurumukh!
> He will teach you how to give true devotion to Nam."

At another place He says:

> "The Shabd alone will keep your honour bright,
> And without Nam there can be no salvation,
> Without the Satguru Nam cannot be attained.
> Such is the law that has been made by the Creator."

It is God's own design or law that no one will gai
salvation except through a Saint. In fact, we can nev
know the true way to worship the Lord without gui
ance from a Saint. Christ speaks of this same tru
when He says, "I say unto thee, except a man be bo
again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3
To be born again means the joining of one's consci
ness with the Shabd or Nam, the eternal and ever
ing Reality. This will enable the soul ultimately t
come one with the Lord. Guru Nanak says:

> "There is no place of refuge for the soul without the
> No haven can the spirit find without it;
> And Yama, the Lord of Death is always harassing it."

Christ also says, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3). That is to say, contact with the Word purges one of all sins.

True Worship

The Lord is all-powerful and no one can oppose or change His Divine Will. The Lord approves of one form of worship alone, and that is devotion to Nam. Guru Nanak says:

"Without Nam there can be no true worship;
The whole world is in delusion."

Worldly people continue to roam life after life in succession from one cell to another in the circle of "eighty-four" by getting entangled in doubts. Other than union with Nam, there is no way out. Guru Nanak further explains:

"He who ignores the path of Nam,
And goes some other way,
Will bitterly repent his choice
When the hour of death arrives."

If we do not follow the path of Nam-Bhakti, devotion to Nam, but follow other paths, there will be no alternative left to us but to repent at the time of death for foolishly wasting our time. He further says:

"In the kingdom of Heaven,
No one may enter without Nam;
Without Nam, the messengers of death
Will harry you unhindered."

Without constantly listening to the inner music of Nam or Shabd, no one can enter the kingdom of God. Those who do not follow this path will have to submit to the tortures by the messengers of death. Swami Ji says:

"In no uncertain words.
The Guru clearly urges you, O brother,

To attach yourself to the endless melody;
For there is no way other than that of Shabd.
Without the Shabd there is no liberation
From the prison of the body."

This is the only means of redemption. This is the *only way of escape from the vale of sorrow of this world.* There is no second way. We should, therefore, take advantage of the rare opportunity granted to us of having the human body to rise above both mind and matter and merge in the Divine. Penances and austerities, recitals of holy books and worship, almsgiving and charities doubtless have helpful effects. But to enjoy their fruit we must be born again. To reap their harvest we must continue to stay in the cycle of births and deaths.

As has been said before, we may return as kings or as very wealthy men. We may rule over vast dominions. We may even go to some of the heavens and paradises. But after exhausting our good karmas we must return again to the earth plane. "Penances win us a crown, and the pleasures of kingship lead to the pains of hell." We rid ourselves of iron chains only to replace them with chains of gold. From 'C'-class prisoners we may become 'A'-class, but prisoners we remain all the same. Deeds, good or bad, keep us tied to the world of illusion; but devotion to the Elixir of Immortality which is Nam, gives us freedom from this world forever.

"Truth alone is the Saviour,
Truth alone brings redemption;
But it must be the truth
That lies beyond the realm of thought!"

The spiritual value of Nam-Bhakti, devotion to Nam, far excels that of any other religious practice. Orthodox forms of worship keep us confined to the domain of Kal, the negative power, but devotion to

Nam takes us beyond the sphere of matter and mind. One can rise above the realm of matter and mind only with the aid of a power which comes from above and beyond this realm. The Sound Current (Nam, Shabd or Word or Logos) comes from Sach Khand, the fifth spiritual region, while Kal is at Trikuti, the second spiritual region. By catching hold of the Divine Music of Nam, we are able to go beyond the domain of Kal. Swami Ji says:

"Earn thou, O friend, with earnest effort
The boundless wealth of Shabd.
Through Shabd achieve a victory over Kal.
Shabd will wipe out all traces of the results of past karmas (actions)
And Shabd will enable you to merge
Into the Lord, whose essence is this Shabd.
All knowledge, without knowledge of Shabd, is false,
All contemplation without Shabd is worthless.
Oh ignorant Man, do not let go thy hold on Shabd,
This is declared by Radhasoami, the true God."

Guru Nanak also states:

"I have tested and thoroughly confirmed the truth of this statement;
Nothing can equal the greatness of the Name of Hari (God.)"

The Saints have tested many different spiritual practices or forms of worship, but they have found that none can compare with Nam-Bhakti. Guru Nanak further explains by giving a simile:

"The parrot of the soul
When in the cage of the body
Speaks the language of the earth.
But let the parrot eat the food of Nam
And drink the nectar of the Shabd within;
Then will he spread his wings
And fly out of the cage
Never to enter into it again."

Our soul is compared to a parrot, and our body to
ge. Just as a parrot that loves his cage makes
rent sounds in it, even so our soul when it is in love
the body at one time laughs and at another time
[illegible] pain, at another [illegible] body,
ps. At one [illegible]
e pleasure. [illegible]
vever, and were to taste the nectar [illegible] Guru Nanak
ve its cage forever and become free.
plains at another place:

> "Countless religious practices performed in endless ways,
> All these will be of no avail;
> Whatever you may do will drag you deeper
> Into the net of Karma"

And again, referring to untrue forms of worship:

> "Seed sown in the wrong season
> Will not bear fruit
> But will die out and cause the farmer
> To lose even his capital."

Further on He says:

> "In Kaliyuga (the present Iron Age) the highest form of worship
> Is that of sacred music, the Lord's Shabd;
> One can hear it by meditating within,
> Through the grace of the Perfect Master."

At another place He states:

> "Himself doth he attain salvation
> And help all the members of his family to do the same,
> To the domain of the Lord within
> He goes, after death, with honor and dignity,
> Such is the reward of the disciple."

Religious practices other than Nam-Bhakti (de
tion to Nam), which we may do to gain salva
will only increase our attachment to this world. I
seed at the wrong time of the year, we will n

reap a good crop, no matter how carefully we may plough the land, how much fertilizer we may use or how much we may water the land. Instead, we will lose our seed, our effort and the money we spend for fertilizer and other things. Similarly, in this Iron Age, the only seed that will really give us salvation is devotion to Nam; and we can get this seed only from a Perfect Master. Swami Ji says:

"In Kaliyuga no deeds or religious practices
Are of any help;
There is no other way than that of Nam.
Without which salvation remains a dream."

Guru Nanak says:

"In Kaliyuga the true ship in which
To cross the ocean of this world
Is the Nam of the Lord;
It is the Perfect Master alone
Who can take you across in the ship of Nam."

In the Iron Age, if there is any deed or practice that is the best of all, it is Nam-Bhakti (devotion to Nam). Guru Nanak makes this point very clear when He says:

"Listen, O brother, and learn
Your sacred duty in the present age:
Go to a Perfect Master and learn the secret.
Both here and in the next world,
The Nam of Hari (God) will befriend you."

The four ages (Gold, Silver, Copper and Iron) follow each other time after time. Each age has its own spirit and characteristic features and man must adapt himself to these changing conditions. Truth is infinite and eternal, but the mind of man is finite. In each age we have to discover Truth anew.

The world began with Satyuga—the Golden Age. It was an age when the span of human life was very long.

Man's attention was not scattered. He had a strong body and enjoyed good health. Only a little effort was required to concentrate the mind. The strongest force in the world was Truth, and it was not difficult to preach or practise it. As the ages went by, however, our span of life became shorter, our health became poorer, and our attention became more and more scattered so that it became more and more difficult to concentrate the mind. Our desires became stronger and more materialistic. The world of the senses began more and more to dominate our thoughts. In short, the methods that were used in the Golden Age to return to the Lord cannot be of any help to us in the present Iron Age.

Today, if a man lives for 50 or 60 years, he is considered quite fortunate. Man's health is far from being as robust as in the Golden Age. A person of the present day is fortunate if he can sit for meditation for as long as an hour or so, without changing posture. Our thoughts are so scattered that our mind cannot remain still and concentrated even for five minutes. The Saints say that if you wish to live in happiness and peace in this Iron Age and go back to meet the Lord, you must practise devotion to the Divine Melody, the Unstruck Music, the Audible Life Stream, which is always resounding within each of us. This alone, they say, can lead us to salvation, take us out of the cycle of birth and death, merge the drop of the soul into the Ocean of the Lord and thus make it one with the Ocean. In this age, Saints have strongly urged the practice of Nam-Bhakti or listening to the inner music of the Shabd, Nam, Word or Logos. Guru Nanak says:

"To the worship of the Lord,
All men address themselves;
But the man who is wrongly led

By his mind does not learn the secret;
Listen, O Saints, let the mind become motionless
By listening to the inner music;
This is the worship that is acceptable
Today to the Lord God."

All of us try to worship God in the way that we think to be the best, for the inclination of the soul is always towards its Source. We search for God without doubt, but by following the dictates of our mind. This worship, however, can never free us from the cycle of birth and death and can never take us to our true Home. Our true Home is Sach Khand, the fifth spiritual region, while the domain of the mind extends only up to the second spiritual region. It is only through devotion to the 'Music of the Spheres' that our mind can become pure and reach its own source, thus making it possible for the soul to return to the Lord. Every form of worship does not lead to God-realization. Swami Ji says:

"This human body with which the Lord has blessed you,
Is a symbol of divine grace.
Use it for true worship of the Lord,
So that your karmas may be burnt
And your soul be made pure."

The human body is a priceless gift. We have obtained it through the Lord's grace. Living in it we must practise devotion to Nam, so that all our karmic accounts may be burned up. Guru Nanak explains:

"All people give some time to worship of the Lord;
But they do not know the proper way to do this;
So the spirit is covered more and more with dirt,
Instead of being purified."

We do not know the real method of worship planned by the Lord for our use. By following the wrong path, we actually make the load of our sins heavier.

Christ says, "Ye worship ye know not what." Swami Ji also speaks about this subject, saying:

> "In false religions is the world entangled,
> And no one tries to learn the secrets of the Nam,
> The only ship that takes you safely across this world.
> The one who is too lazy to churn milk,
> And churns water, what will he obtain?
> Can I possibly recount all the misfortunes of worldly people?
> They are caught in the snares of the world,
> And always keep on wandering without.
> Work that brings a real reward,
> The work of meditating on the Word
> That is resounding in their inner selves,
> To this task they will not devote themselves."

We do not know how to practise the real or true worship, which is devotion to the Nam, Shabd or Word and listening to its music within ourselves. Instead, we perform traditional rituals—that is to say, we value the shells of nuts, and throw away the kernel. If we churn water, we can never get butter. It is only when milk is churned that butter is obtained. Swami Ji advises us to endeavour to join our mind with the Sound Current, for this is the philosopher's stone that can make the mind pure and transmute its present base metal into gold. Guru Nanak says:

> "Those who forget the Word have no place to find shelter;
> Remembering not the Shabd, they have no protection,
> And roam about in error.
> Illusion tosses them about;
> They are just as forlorn as robins
> Seeking for crumbs in a deserted house."

Those who do not search for the Word or Logos have no place either here or beyond. Just as in an empty house, a crow may constantly fly about; but find no food, even so we wander here and there in the vast prison

of eighty-four, but do not find any real relief or rest anywhere. Sadly enough, we lose both this world and the next. Christ, when speaking of the value of the Word, says that the people who turn their back on It and speak ill of It, cannot be pardoned either in this world or in the next. "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matthew 12:32).

The combination of key-letters that enables one to open the safe or the prison of the body is the raising of the body-consciousness so that it hears and unites with the Shabd—'Voice of God.' This is the Ancient Wisdom, which all messengers of God come to teach in this world. This law is eternal and cannot be changed or modified. Yesterday, today, forever it remains the same. This act is real or true worship. It is all-embracing and comprehensive.

The benefits derived from rituals and penances, worship and charity, are all included in the great benefit derived from devotion to the Sound Current. When one is engaged in the repetition of the Five Holy Names, what other repetition can excel it? When we surrender ourselves completely to His Will, what penance can be superior? When we are absorbed in listening to the Unstruck Music within, what other music is there that can ever compare with it? When we constantly contemplate within upon the form of the Master and have His Radiant Form with us wherever we go, what other form of worship can ever be superior? When we drink the Divine Nectar of the Shabd, Nam, Word or Logos, and turn away completely from the pleasures of the world, what other kind of renunciation and detachment can ever be as great?

We cannot therefore reconcile our worshipping in

les and mosques, running away to mountain caves
forests, going on pilgrimages and bathing in sacred
rs, giving alms and charities, reciting holy books and
uring penances, with this true worship, which springs
m contact with the Word or Holy Spirit that resounds
thin us. It is this true form of worship on which God
uts the seal of His approval. It is this true worship
hat brings honor in His Court. There is accordingly
no need to give up one's home, family and children.
While still with them, we should concentrate our atten-
tion on the sweet melody that is always resounding with-
in us. It is the only way to escape from the karmic web.
It is this form of devotion alone that breaks all our kar-
mic ties with this world and frees us from the crushing
load of recurring births and deaths. It is this form of
worship alone that enables us to transcend the regions of
mind and matter, to untie the knot that binds the mind
and soul together, to remove the coverings of the three
attributes – Harmony, Activity and Inertia, that enslave
the soul, to recognise our inner self and ultimately t
realize God.

Saints, therefore, urge us to understand and practi
this form of worship and make no show of the gra
that we may receive within. The more carefully a
silently we preserve this wealth, the greater will be
measure of its flow from Him. It should not be dissip
by using it to perform miracles or for winning short-l
fame. His grace is an elixir that will give life eve
ing provided that it is not allowed to flow out. I
most rare and valuable jewel that must be kept in a
ed treasure-chest. Kabir Sahib says:

> "When you have found the jewel of Nam,
> Keep it tied up most safely in your bundle.
> ...le, appreciates its worth,

And there is no one who desires to buy it.
The world is ignorant of its great value."

After obtaining the priceless wealth of Nam, keep it so securely that no one will know about it. In this wide world there is no one deserving of it, there is no one who realizes its worth, there is no one who wishes to buy it. All the worldly people are in the market for sons and daughters, wealth and possessions, honor and glory. No one is prepared to pay the price asked for the jewel of Nam, which is to give up oneself to the Lord and to surrender oneself completely to His Will. Kabir Sahib says further:

"All the philosophers' stones have I tried,
But none of them is so wonderful as Nam.
If only a tiny particle of it is absorbed,
The whole of one's being is transmuted into gold."

We have known and tried all kinds of alchemy, but none of them equals the alchemy of Nam. If only a minute bit of it is absorbed, one's whole being will turn into gold. In other words, this means that the purpose of human birth will be achieved and fulfilled. Similarly, Guru Nanak says:

"By obtaining enlightenment from the Guru,
The wise ones have collected the true wealth.
Priceless, indeed, is the wealth of Nam.
Only some rare soul doth obtain it from a Saint."

Those who realize the great value of Nam guard it very carefully. The ability to know its value, however, is obtained only in the company of the Saints. If we were to discover a diamond, how safely we would preserve it! We would wrap it in downy cotton and place it in an iron chest, keeping the key of the chest next to our skin. We would say nothing about it, even to our family and children, for fear that they would divulge the secret and we would lose the diamond. This is the care

that we would take of a worldly thing of which the price can be known and fixed. You can, therefore, well imagine how much solicitude and watchfulness are needed in the case of the priceless wealth of Nam, the worth of which cannot be assessed, and by the possession of which we become one with God. Swami Ji says:

> "Search for the Guru, and then to the Guru
> Give your devotion;
> Nam is the true philosopher's stone:
> Hide it within your soul,
> And do not reveal the secret."

Just as Rasayan (a universal remedy or panacea) spreads through every part of the body and removes all its ills, even so Nam enters every pore. We should devote ourselves to Nam or the Word, however, only for the purpose of God-realization, and not for the purpose of getting children, wealth or power. The Lord's grace will be showered on us in proportion to the intensity of our love for Him. Just as the rain-bird yearns for drops of rain and constantly cries for them, even so must the devotee long for the Lord. A devotee's desire for God is like a miser's craving for wealth. He will yearn for God as a drowning man gasps for breath. The devotee remembers God in the same way that a lover remembers his loved one. She is never out of his mind, even for a moment. The devotee fixes his mind on God just as a cow always remembers its calf, even while it is grazing in the field. He merges his thoughts in the remembrance of the Lord just as a deer gives all its attention to the listening of the music of a flute. It is so intent on listening to the music that it never withdraws its mind from it even though its absorption in the music may lead to its capture. The devotee develops a love for the Lord which is similar to the love of a moth for the flame.

He has the same love for the Lord as a fish has for water. The fish cannot bear a moment's separation from water and when taken out of the water it will die. Such love is true worship.

We must not love the Lord because we are afraid of losing money in our business, or may fear the loss of wealth, possessions, honor or glory. This is a very inferior kind of devotion to the Lord. We should be devoted to the Lord because of our true love for Him. Worshipping the Lord in order to gain possession of worldly objects is the same as the worship of snakes that is practised in some parts of our country. People do not worship snakes because they have love for them, but because they are afraid of them. The true basis of religion is love, not fear. We should, therefore, develop true love for the Lord in our hearts. Tulsi Sahib says:

> "Cleanse thy heart's chamber for the Beloved to come,
> Let nothing else remain, make room there
> For His divine majestic presence."

The Lure of the World

Our heart is always longing for worldly objects, and yet at the same time we wish to meet the Lord. How can these two kinds of desire live together? Love for the world and love for God go ill together. Where one is, the other is not. There is only one mind and it can either turn towards the world or towards God; it cannot do both.

If one of our close and dear relatives goes a long way away from us, we spend sleepless nights in remembering him. We may even weep because of the pain of separation. But have we ever shed a single tear for the Lord? Have we ever stayed awake all night in remembering

Him? We send our child with a nursemaid to a park, and the nursemaid looks after the child very lovingly. She tries to keep him happy in many different ways. She tells him fascinating stories. She gives him toys to play with. She offers him sweets to keep him satisfied and contented. But a moment comes when nothing seems to satisfy the child and he begins to cry. He wants his mother and nothing or nobody else. At such a moment the mother herself can no longer bear the separation. She comes running to the child and puts him in her lap.

Similarly, as long as we are completely absorbed in love for the Creation and have forgotten the Creator, we can never get His attention. It is only when we forget the Creation and begin to really long for the Creator, that we win His love and grace and He then lifts us up so that we can merge into Him. Guru Nanak says:

> "Only those who are prepared to pay for the love of the Lord
> Will find the Lord and the vast treasure of His knowledge.
> Overcoming worldly desires and cravings,
> We must devote ourselves to love for the Lord."

Paltu Sahib says:

> "On every side you hear people speaking of Nam,
> But Nam is not so easy to attain.
> Because the path of Nam is different;
> Only he who has killed his desires
> Can attain it."

It is not as easy to get the wealth of Nam as many people think. Only those can have it who drive all desires out of their mind and fill every pore of their body with intense love. Tulsi Sahib says:

> "The heart is filled with many strong desires,
> And avarice is all the time increasing;
> Where then is any room for seating the Lord within?"

Our mind is constantly filled with different kinds of desires and cravings. We barely satisfy one desire, when another springs up. When a desire is not fulfilled according to our wishes, it becomes the cause of unhappiness or frustration. When our mind is constantly occupied in this manner, it cannot receive the Lord. Guru Nanak says:

> "God the Giver never tires;
> He endlessly continues to bestow His gifts,
> Even though we may tire of receiving them.
> Through countless ages
> We have pursued the pleasures of the senses,
> And gone through birth and death again and still again,
> Harried by goading Time, relentless Kal.

The Lord is the Supreme Giver. He never tires of bestowing His gifts and granting our desires, but we mortals tire of receiving them. If we desire anything strongly, we must take birth to fulfill this desire. If we again desire something very much, we come back again. Thus we continue to return to this world over and over again. But when we finally become dissatisfied with worldly desires and ask for the Lord Himself, He grants us this desire also and takes us to Himself. Guru Nanak says:

> "As high as the mountains are our desires,
> And death rides on our back
> Holding fast the reins."

Our worldly desires and cravings are truly innumerable. They are, so to say, even taller or greater than the Himalayas. It might not be possible to fulfill all of them, even if the Lord were to grant us a life that was two thousand years long. But the fact is that death is standing very close and we can never know if we will live even for another two or three years, for death may

pounce upon us very suddenly and thus put an end to all our worldly plans. Swami Ji says:

"The lure of the world deludes all men,
And no one can escape from Kal.
The whole world is burning in the blaze of desires,
All creatures are tormented in this inferno.
No way of escape can be seen,
And everyone perforce must burn in this hellish furnace.
Day and night this fire consumes them,
And birth and death they will have to undergo
Time and again.
Thus will they wander about in different bodies,
Without discovering the cure for their disease.
How can I put in words the sufferings they undergo?
Their misery is indescribable."

We give so much of our attention to greed and attachment to the world that we even forget the fact that some day we must die. Whoever is born must die. But under the influence of our wish for worldly possessions, we do so many things and create so many desires that it is not easy to satisfy them. The result is that we are constantly burning in the fire of our desires, not only in this life but after it in the fires of hell. This is not all. The force of our desires brings us back again and again to the wheel of eighty-four. The pain and suffering, that is our fate in these lives, defies description. Saints, therefore, tell us that we should completely surrender to the will of the Lord and live happily within His commandments. The mind should not create any new desires or cravings, whatever the Lord has granted us should be accepted with contentment. Saint Nam Dev says:

"If Thou makest me a ruler over men,
It shall be to Thy glory alone.
And if it be Thy Will to make me a beggar
It will make no difference at all to me."

Guru Nanak also says:

"Seat me on a throne;
And I shall be Thy servant.
And it will matter not at all
If Thou makest me a poor and lowly grass-cutter."

O Lord, He says, "even if you make me a ruler over vast dominions, I will use my high position to honor and glorify you, and in devotion to you I will serve you. And if you choose to make me a beggar, I will still go to no other door but yours." Our soul has no place of refuge other than the Lord. We should consider very carefully the fact that our mind creates our desires and cravings, and that we then expect God to fulfill these desires. We never try to tell the mind that it should act according to the will of the Lord and that it should adapt itself to His commands. Rather, we ask the Lord to carry out the wishes of our mind. Swami Ji says:

"In self-surrender to the Guru's Will
And utterly contented with your lot,
Remember the Guru always, friend.
Whatever He may do, consider it
To be of truest benefit to you;
And always treasure in your heart
Whatever word He utters."

Guru Nanak says:

"It is the Gurmukh alone
Who knows the way to true devotion;
How to surrender himself completely
To the Will of the Lord he knows."

Saints alone know how to worship the Lord, because they live in His Will and devote themselves to His worship. Guru Nanak further says:

"If you resign yourself humbly to the Will of the Guru,
All treasures shall be opened unto you.
Nam alone is of help at the moment of death."

Complete surrender to Him brings peace and bliss and ultimately the Lord helps us. Christ also says the same thing, "Because I seek not mine own will, but the Will of the Father, which hath sent me" (John 5:30). He further states, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). Who can be a greater king than a person who has no wants or desires, who has completely surrendered himself to the Lord, and who is happy in whatever way the Lord may keep him?

Among the Mohammedans there are two kinds of faqirs or holy men. The first kind is known as Ahl-i-dua (men of prayers) and the second kind as Ahl-i-raza (men of surrender to His will). The second kind is far superior to the first. We should, therefore, practise devotion to Nam by surrendering ourselves completely to His Will.

The Purpose of Life

The Lord, after creating the eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) species of living things, divided them as follows:

Thirty lakh[1] kinds of plants in the plant kingdom
Twenty seven lakh kinds of insects and reptiles,
Fourteen lakh kinds of birds,
Nine lakh kinds of creatures living in water,
And four lakh kinds of animals, gods, goddesses, jinns, ghosts and human beings.

We are all prisoners in the vast prison of this world because of our karmas. We can escape from it only when our soul realizes the Lord. The gift of human life has been granted to us to enable us to escape from the cycle of recurring births and deaths. It is only in

[1]A lakh is 100,000.

the human form that one has the unique distinction and honor of meeting the Lord. Guru Arjan Dev says:

"The Lord created eighty-four lakhs of species,
And of these He made man the highest.
In this body you have reached the top of the ladder.
If now you do not make an effort to climb to the Kingdom of Heaven,
You will be drawn down into the vortex
Of the cycle of birth and death;
And in this way you will come and go,
And will always be in misery."

Life as a human being is the top rung of the ladder. If we try hard when we have the human body, we can step off the ladder and onto the roof; but if we slip we will fall headlong into the prison of this world again. Guru Arjan says:

"Many lives have I had as insects and worms;
And many lives of elephants and fish and deer;
In many lives I have been a snake or a bird;
And then again I have been a tree for lives unnumbered.
After countless ages I have now got this human life,
And now is the time to find the Lord and break my chains."

For endless ages we have been moving from one form of life to another. We have been plants and vegetables, insects and reptiles, fish and other water creatures, birds and animals. After a long, long time, we now have the human form and all of us should take advantage of this human body to start on the path that leads to God-realization. Maulana Rum says:

"From minerals I became a plant,
And then to a higher form did go;
Eighty-four hundred thousand lives have I passed
And each was better than the last."

Shamas-i-Tabriz says:

"It is only after many ages that one gets the human form.
If once you slip, you can never know when you will get it again."

It is for this reason that the sages and seers of India call the human body Nar-Narayani-Deh (the body which God has made, in which He Himself dwells, and in which alone He can be met). Muslim Saints have called it Ashraf-ul-Makhlukat (the top of the creation). Jewish holy men say that God made man in His own image. Kabir Sahib says:

> "Rare is the human birth,
> One does not get it every time;
> Even as the fruit that ripens and falls to the ground,
> Does not again appear on the branch."

Swami Ji says:

> "You now have been blessed with a human birth;
> So now work hard to profit from this boon.
> Devote yourself to the task of attaining salvation.
> Do not get lost in the mazes of the world.
> This world is like a dream you see at night,
> The body itself, the home, all other things
> Are really all illusion.
> What will you gain if you wander here in error?"

The Lord has granted us the human form so that we may do our real work. Our real work is to labor to return to our Real Home. This is true devotion to the Lord. This world is like an immense dream. Actually, it has no permanent reality, substance, or existence. We should not forget that all our friends and relations, our wealth and possessions, our honor and glory, are transient and fleeting. Even our body is fragile and short-lived. It will fast decay. Neither the body nor anything else will accompany us when we leave this world. The Saints, therefore, say with great emphasis that we should not fail to make the best use of this wonderful opportunity of having a human body. Family and children, eating and drinking, we have had in all of

our lives. The one thing that we did not have the opportunity of doing was to practise devotion to the Lord. This, indeed, is the sole purpose of human life. This is our true work.

Alas! when we are born as human beings, we completely forget the purpose of life. We become so absorbed in enjoying the pleasures of the senses, in devotion to our caste, creed and country, that we have no time to think of anything else. "Eat, drink and be merry while you are here," people say, "for who knows anything about the next life." This attitude makes us busy ourselves with the world and its attractions, with the result that we quite forget about the inevitability of death. This is the case even when we see our companions departing, one by one, never to return. We see that they go empty-handed, leaving everything of the world behind. We seem, however, to think that perhaps death is for others and not for us. Guru Nanak describes our condition as follows:

> "In work or money-making is everyone in the world entangled,
> And no one makes an effort to pause for a moment and think;
> Forgetful of the cycle of birth and death,
> Man lays waste all his powers.
> He is the slave of the Mind;
> Deceived by his desires, he is an utter fool."

We are busy working all day long in order to get money, but we never pause to think about the main purpose of human life—the purpose for which God sent us here. Our own house is on fire, but we are busy trying to extinguish fires in the houses of others. Our own house is being robbed, but we are busy guarding the houses of others. We can barely carry our own heavy load, yet we serve as beasts of burden for others. Not only do we deceive ourselves, but we also deceive the

world. How very foolish and ignorant we are! Swami Ji says:

"How shall I describe the doings of Kal,
Who rides with might over all;
He has caught all creatures in his traps,
And is misleading them.
No one, alas, fears what awaits him,
Nor stands in awe of Yama—lord of death."

Kabir Sahib, speaking on the same subject, says:

"For a moment, friend, pause and consider,
The gifts you brought from Heaven at birth;
And what you will take with you when you die.
When you came to this world your hands were empty,
And when you leave, you will go empty-handed.
This body is like a paper bag
Which will dissolve in a few drops of rain.
Listen, O Saints, to the words of Kabir;
Without the gift of Nam,
You will repent most bitterly."

We come into this world empty-handed, and empty handed do we depart. No one has come into this world bringing anything with him. Nor can anyone leave it taking anything with him at the time of his departure. Our body is like a paper bag that a few drops of water can destroy. It is like a piece of thin glass that a little gust of wind can shatter. It is like a goat skin filled with air floating on a river, which sinks down to the bottom the moment the air goes out of it. It is like a wall of sand that may collapse at any moment. And at the time of death our body will be consigned either to fire or earth.

Mahmud Ghaznavi invaded India seventeen times and carried back to Ghazni a tremendous amount of booty in the shape of precious stones, gold and silver. His army wrought wreck and ruin, bloodshed and des-

truction wherever it went, leaving behind it countless widows and orphans. When the time of his death drew near, he ordered his court officials to put all the booty he had brought from India on exhibition in a hall in his palace. When this was done and he was carried slowly around the hall on his bed, he sighed deeply and with tears streaming down his cheeks, he exclaimed, "Nothing of this wealth, which I committed endless cruelties and atrocities to gain, will go with me now! After my death, please let my empty hands be shown to my people, so they may learn a lesson from them."

Christ says in the Bible: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6: 27). That is to say, instead of spending all our time trying to amass wealth and things of the world, we should work to gather the priceless wealth of Nam or the Word, which never perishes. The treasure of the Word that I will give you, says Christ, is indestructible and everlasting for I give it to you from the Lord and not from myself. Swami Ji says:

> "After endless suffering we have obtained the human form,
> How sad it is that under sway of the mind
> We are lost in the pleasures of the senses."

All the attachments that we have with the world are a result of the fact that we are in a material body. When we are in such a body, friends and relatives, wealth and possessions, castes and countries—all seem to be our own; we at least try to make them our own. The moment we depart from the body, we become complete strangers to all of these worldly attachments. As long, therefore, as we are in the body, we should make it do our real work. We must meditate upon God.

glory, all desert us when the angels of death take us away.

We are bound to each other by karmic strings. We come here to settle our karmic debits and credits. We come to this world as parents and children, as friends and relatives. But as soon as our karmic accounts for this life are settled we depart, each going his own way. This world is like an inn in which we all gather together for the night; but at daybreak we all go our different ways. We are like birds that take shelter together in a tree in the evening, but with the first light of the dawn, each flies off on its own way.

Just as the platform of a railway station is crowded with people before a train leaves, but is deserted after its departure, even so is our family life and all our other worldly activities. They all come to an end when we depart. Again, the world is like the stage of a theatre on which each actor plays his own role and then makes his exit. During the play there is a king, a queen and a villain, but as soon as their allotted roles are over, they leave the stage, and then there is neither king nor queen nor villain. All of us come into this world to settle our karmic accounts and as soon as they are liquidated, our ties with the world are broken and we are devoured by the Unknown.

When we die, our relatives are sad, but the new family into which we are born rejoices at our arrival. If we have forgotten all the relatives of our many past lives, how can we ever remember for all time our present family, for whom we work so hard and whom we love so much? Guru Nanak says:

> "Father, mother, all that we own, and even the body itself
> Are stricken with disease and death;

And all our kith and kin so dear
Will surely be struck down by death."

Our father and mother have to depart from this world and leave us behind. And everything that we see around us in this world will remain behind us when we depart. Nothing will go with us. All our relatives and even our body of which we take such good care will not go with us beyond. Swami Ji says:

"Wife and son and grandson,
And all the wealth that you may have—
None of these are of any help in your hour of need;
Even the breath that comes and goes in rhythm now,
Will cease, and then this house of clay
Will have no life in it.
Forget not that this body is just like
The leather container of the water-carrier;
Every hour it drips and drips
And soon it will be emptied."

None of our relatives can be of any real help at the time of our death. Just as a tank full to the brim with water is soon emptied if the pipe through which the water leaves the tank is left open, in the same way our body, which is a reservoir of breaths, will die when its allotted breaths are used up. This is the end of all life. Swami Ji gives another illustration:

"As long as a hide is filled with air,
It floats on the surface of the river,
And people can cross the river with its help.
But as soon as the air runs out,
It sinks to the bottom of the river.
Whoever is then clinging to it
Will sink down to the bottom too."

The Saints have only one purpose in mind in giving these examples—that is to keep us aware of the fact of inevitable death, and to urge us to hasten our spiritual

glory, all desert us when the angels of death take us away.

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The Saints have only one purpose in mind in giving these examples—that is to keep us aware of the fact of inevitable death, and to urge us to [illegible] *our spiritual*

journey so that we may swim safely across the river of this world before the skin (of our body) is deflated.

Humility

Saints tell us that we should search for God in spite of our physical limitations and weaknesses of the flesh. But instead of taking this advice, we are more apt to become victims of pride and egotism. Just think for a moment. While we are in this body, what are we proud of? Is it our youth? Have we not seen old age creeping upon people? Is it our health? Have we not seen the pitiful condition of patients in hospitals? Is it our wealth? Have we not seen rich people losing all their money? Is it power and authority or honor and glory of which we are proud? Have we not seen powerful and influential leaders forced to face the hangman's noose or being shot by an assassin's bullet? In the space of a moment, monarchies may be overthrown and their monarchs may end their lives in prison or be sentenced to be shot dead. What then are we proud of? Kabir Sahib says:

> "The burning wood says to the blacksmith :
> Even though you are burning me in your forge today,
> Do not forget that there will come a day,
> When I shall burn to ashes your fine body."

To the potter the clay says:

> "It matters not if you today
> Are kneading and crushing me with your heavy feet;
> For the day will surely come
> When I shall tread on you,
> And trample on your body."

The blacksmith burns wood in the forge to heat horseshoes. The wood warns him that the day is not far off when it will burn him on the cremation pyre. The

potter kneads the clay to make earthenware jars and pots. The clay warns him that before very long it will make him a part of itself when he is buried in a grave. Similarly, Swami Ji says:

> "O man, what are you so proud of?
> Your body will turn to dust,
> And you will again return
> To the cycle of birth and rebirth."

The Saints, therefore, advise us to be meek and humble. The more humble and modest we are, the more pronounced will be our devotion to the Lord and the greater will be His grace. Christ also speaks of humility and meekness in the Bible, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)... "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5). He again says, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:4). And again, "*Verily I say unto you,* except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3). Swami Ji similarly states:

> "Be meek and humble and avoid lust and anger."

Likewise Guru Nanak says:

> "O Nanak, I am the lowest of all,
> And have fallen at your feet;
> Pray save me."

The Saints, who are the highest amongst men, are always so very meek and humble. Humility is their distinctive quality. They approach the door of the Lord as beggars. Guru Nanak in deep humility calls Himself the servant of the servants of the Lord; the lowest of the low. Even after they have attained the highest

possible degree of spirituality, they remain very humble. We should draw inspiration from the lives of the Saints. But when we get the reins of power in our hands, we are apt to become proud and to look down with disdain on other human beings. Kabir Sahib says:

> "This way and that I went,
> Looking for an evil man;
> But no man seemed to show any signs of evil.
> Then I searched within my own mind,
> And lo! I was the worst of all God's creatures.
> I am, O Kabir, the very lowest of all;
> Except myself all men are good.
> He who sees the world this way,
> That man alone shall I call a friend."

The principal aim of the Saints is to impress upon us that we should try to get rid of our pride and ego. We should, they say, be humble and devote ourselves to meditation on the Supreme Lord. Then alone will we fulfill the object of human life. Dadu Sahib says:

> "O Dadu! I am far too worthless;
> I do not even deserve to be allowed
> To open my mouth.
> All I can do is to weep;
> Since this body, my precious treasure
> I have lost and have gained nothing;
> It is gone, and to no purpose."

Mahatma Charandas says:

> "Horses and elephants and wealth,
> And countless concubines to enjoy,
> Each one as lovely as the moon—
> All these are worthless, indeed,
> As compared with the treasure of Nam,
> Without Nam one suffers endless tortures,
> In the land of Yama, the Lord of death."

Guru Nanak says:

> "There is no true companion, no true comrade,
> Other than Nam; salvation can be gained
> Only if you meditate on Nam."

When humility is born within us, we will naturally turn towards God. This, however, can happen only when we have the company of Saints. And it is only through the infinite grace of the Lord that we can get the company of the Saints, the Saviours. Guru Amar Das says:

> "The true devotion is that
> Which is pleasing to the Lord Himself;
> And the devotion that pleases Him
> Is utter self-surrender at His feet."

The Grace of the Lord

We can never truly worship unless the Lord wills it. How can a blind man ever catch hold of a man who can see unless the latter either calls out to him or gives him his own hand! Our attention is always concentrated on the world and its passing show. We are, so to say, entirely world-oriented. Only the Lord's mercy and grace can make us God-oriented. Guru Nanak says:

> "Birth and death are in Thy hands, O Lord!
> And Thine is all the greatness.
> It is only he on whom Thy grace is showered,
> Who is exalted."

Similarly, Kabir Sahib says:

> "His is the power and the glory,
> And man himself is absolutely helpless.
> He is a tiny seed, but the Lord
> Can change him into a spreading tree;

One can then realize how the small seed
Contains within it the huge tree.
I have done nothing,
Nor was I capable of doing anything,
Whatever deeds brought me a little fame,
Were really done by Him;
For I am a man with a weak and helpless body;
And yet He showered His grace on me,
And thus Kabir changed into the Kabir
Of whom all men now speak.
I had no capability, no power,
I could do nothing that had any worth;
Hari, the Lord, did everything that was done.
People attribute it to me in error,
For, verily, it was You who had the power,
And did whatever deeds were done,
And I did nothing.
O! how can I say that I did anything,
When You were always sitting in this body,
Moving it here and there as a puppet is moved,"

In the same way, Christ says in the Bible that man is by himself powerless to realize God. He can only do so with His grace. "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." (John 6:65). And again He says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44).

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, at the beginning of the poem called 'The Twelve Months' says:

"We have been separated from Thee, O Lord!
Because of our own karmas.
Be gracious now, and unite us
With Thy essence."

"O Lord," He says, "We are separated from You because of our karmas and it is not in our own power

to return to You. Therefore, in your kindness, shower your grace and mercy on us, so that we may return to You."

Further He says:

> "If the choice was our own,
> And anyone could meet the Beloved,
> Why then, should there have been
> The pangs of separation
> And such grief and sorrow?
> The Lord is found, O Nanak! only when
> We keep the company of the enlightened ones,
> And surrender ourselves to them."

"If we could reach You by our own efforts," he says to God,"Why should we be undergoing the misery of birth and rebirth, and be crying our heart out in suffering? We are utterly helpless to reach You by ourselves."

Christ says, that He prays only for the disciples whom the Lord has allotted to Him, and not for the whole world.

> "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine." (John 17:9).

And again He repeats His statement that no one can come to Him unless it is by the wish and will of the Lord:

> "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44).

Guru Nanak says:

> "The counterfeit coin and the genuine,
> Both, O Lord, have been made by You,
> You Yourself are the judge.
> The coins that are genuine
> Are treasured by You as of value;

The base ones are rejected,
And are treated with contempt."

The Lord created all human beings, both good and bad. He Himself sits as judge to determine who is good and who is bad, who is genuine and who is counterfeit. Those whom He makes fit for His test, He accepts in His treasury, while the others continue to wander about in this world of delusion.

When the Lord bestows His grace, He does so through the Saints. Actually, He Himself comes in the form of a human being and awakens in us love for the Lord. By devotion to Nam He merges us in Him. Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, says:

"By His grace we find the Guru
And the Guru teaches us the secret
Of uniting the soul with Shabd."

Christ says in the Bible, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." (John 15:16).

With the Lord's grace we obtain the company of Saints. With their grace we learn the secret of joining our soul with the Sound Current, the Shabd or Nam. Once the mind becomes fond of listening to this 'Voice of God', it turns away forever from the world and all worldly objects. The sweetness of this inner spiritual melody makes everything else seem tasteless or bitter. Compared with its enchantment, everything else seems dull and uninteresting. The possession of diamonds naturally causes one to lose interest in coloured shells. In the same way, the sweetness of the inner melody makes this world cease to be an attraction and turns the mind Godwards. One's love for the world comes to an end and love for

God takes its place. Further Guru Amar Das says:

> "Whatever is, is by His will;
> By His will we find the Guru
> Who fills our mind with love for the Shabd."

Similarly Christ says, "A man can receive nothing, Except it be given him from heaven." (John 3:27).

Whenever the Lord wishes us to join Him, He connects our thought-currents with the Shabd or Audible Life Stream through one of the Saints. The Saints are messengers of God. They come to the world at His command. They take back to their real Home those who are blessed with His grace. Christ speaks of this in the Bible, saying, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23).

Again He says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28).

The Message of the Saints

Every Saint brings from the house of the Lord only one message. Every Saint comes to preach the same Truth—the same Reality—the same Spirituality. They say there is one God, and that our soul is of His essence. We can escape from the wheel of birth and death only when we merge in the Lord. That Lord dwells in the temple of the human body. It is only in the human form that we can realize Him. The obstacle between us and the Lord is our mind. It is because of it that we do not see God within ourselves. This obstacle can be removed only by means of joining

our soul with the Divine Melody. Both, the Sound Current and the Lord are within us. The way to Him is also in the human body. It is only by being in the company of the Saints that we can know the Path within and succeed in bringing the soul in touch with the transcendent music. This Shabd is called, in the Bible, the Word or Logos. Christ called it "Living Water." He said, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John.4:14).

Guru Nanak called the Shabd or Nam "Elixir", and Muslim Saints call it "The Water of Life", for by getting it we gain life eternal and free the soul from the prison of the body. The company of the Saints can be had only through the grace of the Lord. No Saint comes to the world with a new teaching or philosophy. He brings the same Ancient Wisdom. But after the departure of the Saints, we forget their teaching. We forget the Reality. Then another Saint makes His appearance, tells us of the eternal Reality, and frees us from our doubts and delusions. Thus lives on the eternal message, the call of God. This is the natural way designed by God for people to meet Him. The Saints come to remind us of this True Path. Christ says in the Bible, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." (John 12:49).

He further says, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." (John 7:16). Every Saint speaks only from experience and not from hearsay. Whatever He witnesses Himself, that alone He speaks of. Guru Nanak says:

NOTES ON SAINTS MENTIONED IN "THE PATH"

Saints mentioned in this book were not all perfect Masters, but all of them, with perhaps one or two exceptions, followed the mystic path of devotion. The years of their birth and death are only nearly approximate. It is significant that none has written of his own life-career.

BHIKHA SAHEB

A mid-sixteenth-century saint from Uttar Pradesh, Bhikha Saheb had his spiritual headquarters in Bhurkuda in District Raipur in U.P. He was given Light by Gulal Sahib and was nominated as his successor by him. His devotion to his Master was so great that after initiation he never left his spiritual centre.

BULLEH SHAH (1680-1752)

A Muslim mystic, was born at Kasur in District Lahore (Punjab) and was a disciple of Shah Inayat. He was involved in serious trouble with the Mullahs of the Punjab because of his outspoken and uncompromising criticisms of the Islamic rites and rituals and ecclesiastical law.

CHARAN DAS (1703-1782)

The mystic poet was born in Rajasthan, conducted Satsangs in Delhi and passed away in the same town.

(1544-1603)

A saint of Rajputana, well known for his bold ...ances in his beautiful poetry.

...ID (1200-1280)

Born at Dipalpur in the Punjab, Farid became a ...ciple of Qutab-ud-din. His master advised him ...o sleep little, eat little, speak little, associate little ...th the world and do devotion." This single piece ...f advice was enough for Farid who followed it most ...igorously and became a great saint. Farid's devo...tional songs are popular throughout the villages of the Punjab and Sind.

KABIR (1399-1519)

He was a weaver by profession and lived a married life in Benaras. Loi was the name of his wife. Ramanand, a Sanyasi, was his Guru; but Kabir expounded Sant Mat. He was persecuted conti...nually for his frank and outspoken attacks on the priestly classes of Hindus and Mohammedans.

GURU NANAK (1469-1538)

He was the first of the ten Sikh Gurus and was bo... at Talwandi now known as Nankana, 35 miles fr... Lahore. He preached the purest and highest form... Sant Mat. Guru Nanak's successors, Guru A... Dev and Guru Ram Das have also been mentio...

HAFIZ (1320-1389)

A famous poet saint of Persia.

MIRABAI (1573-1630)

She was the daughter of Rao Ratan Singh...

of Jodhpur, and was married to the Crown Prince Bhojraj who subsequently became ruler of Udaipur. In the beginning Mirabai was a devotee of Shri Krishna but was later initiated into the mystic path by Ravidas, the cobbler saint. Mirabai's songs are popular in the hamlets and villages of Rajasthan, Saurashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh for the last 300 years.

NAMDEV

He was a Maharashtrian (Western India) saint of the fifteenth century and was a tailor by profession. He had his headquarters at Pandharpur in the earlier stages. Later on, he moved to North India and passed away in the Punjab. He wrote thousands of devotional poems in Hindi, Marathi and Punjabi, and some of these are included in the *Granth Sahib*.

PALTU

A Hindu saint, of the eighteenth century, noted for his bold utterances and outspoken description of the Mystic Path.

RAVIDAS or RAIDAS

A famous North Indian saint; was cobbler by profession and Chamar (outcast) of caste. His time synchronises with Kabir. Among his distinguished followers was Mirabai, Queen of Udaipur.

RUMI or MAULANA RUM (1207-1277)

A well-known Moslem saint of Persia, who was a devoted disciple of Shamas-i-Tabriz, and author of the world-famous *Masnavi*.

SAHAJOBAI

An eighteenth-century woman saint of Rajputana. She led a householder's life and was given light by Charandas.

SWAMI JI MAHARAJ (1818-1878)

The Great Saint and Founder of what is now known as the "RADHA SWAMI" Faith, Science and Philosophy. His real name was Seth Shiv Dayal Singh. His teachings are explained in two famous books *Sar Bachan* (prose) and *Sar Bachan* (poetry). The former, a collection of extracts from his discourses, has been translated in English and the latter is a collection of devotional songs.

SHEIKH SAADI

A great Persian poet-saint of the thirteenth century.

TULSIDAS (1532-1623)

A great mystic poet who lived in Banaras. His *Ramayana is, up to this day, recited in the length and* breadth of India.

TULSI SAHIB (1788-1848)

A great poet-saint of Hathras, an exponent of Sant Mat and the author of *Ghat Ramayana.* He was born in the princely family of Peshwas and was heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Poona and Satara. He began to show signs of a devotional trend of mind at a very early age, and had no attachments or desires for worldly pleasures and pursuits. A few days before his coronation was to take place, he left his home and fled towards the north in the garb

of a sadhu. He settled in Hathras, near Aligarh, in the U.P., where he was known as Dakkhini Baba (the sage from the South). Swami ji also came in contact with him; in fact, Swami ji's mother was a disciple of Tulsi Sahib long before Swami ji was born. Tulsi Sahib departed from this world in 1848.

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